

External Influence on News Reporting: The Case of *Reporter, Fortune, and Capital*

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Mihret Aschalew, entitled: External Influence on News Reporting: The case of *Reporter*, *Fortune*, and *Capital* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in journalism and communication complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

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This study was aimed at investigating whether external influence exists on news reporting. To this end, *Reporter* Amharic, *Fortune* and *Capital* newspapers were selected as a case from the Ethiopian print media. The most relevant theoretical framework to the topic, political economy of the mass media has been employed as theoretical framework. Qualitative data gathering techniques of focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview were employed to undertake the study. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, 18 journalists were selected for focus group discussion and in depth interview. In depth interview was employed mainly to get rich data that can enable the researcher to examine whether there are external influences on news reporting while focus group discussion was used to get preliminary information and diverse views regarding the issue.

The study revealed that there is external influence on news reporting in *Reporter* Amharic and *Capital* while the influence is relatively minimal in *Fortune*. Heavy reliance on official sources, journalist-source friendship, news gathering habitual (routine) and news management of PRs, advertisers' interest and self censorship resulted in the mediation of news of the newspapers.

The study has revealed there is ownership interference and symbiosis between the newspapers and powerful political and economic actors that resulted in influence on news reporting from outside.

The study has concluded that news reporting of the newspapers investigated was influenced by external political and economic actors' interests though a relatively better professional standard enabled Fortune to minimize the influence.

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List of Acronyms

EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
PR	Public Relations
FGD	Focus group discussion

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As Negussie (2006:31) argues, the history of private media in Ethiopia dates back to the 1950s with the circulation of the first private newspaper “The Voice of Ethiopia” and “Ye Ethiopia Demits” from mid-fifties to early sixties. The publisher was National Patriotic Association and the supervision was carried out by the Ministry of Information. Later bilingual (Amharic and English) magazines like “Addis Reporter” and “Mennen” with their focus on art, social affairs and policy critics (to a lesser extent) were popular among the elite in the capital. But this development was cut short by the emergence of the Military junta, “Dergue”. The private media was altogether banned during all the years that the military regime reigned.

After the fall of the Dergue regime and with the coming of the EPRDF to power, the charter of the transitional government (1991), which was based on the universal declaration of human rights of the UN, guarantees democratic right of the citizens to freedom of expression, and then the 1992 press law paved the way for the proliferation of private newspapers and magazines in Addis Ababa (ibid).

This proliferation can be seen as a remarkable demonstration of the public’s long-standing disappointment with the state owned media and its loyalty as a “mouth piece” for the government as well as the desperate need for an alternative source of information (as EHRCO cited in Shimelis, 2002: 184). Consequently as it is noted in Costantinos et al (1994:289), people with diverse opinions and arguments about the execution of the government felt concerned to come forward to express their views.

The declaration of freedom of the press under proclamation No.34/1992 provided legal backing and further paved the way for the evolution and mushrooming of private newspapers and magazines in the country. The issuance of a number of licenses to private newspapers followed and resulted in 200 newspapers and 87 magazines becoming functional within five years (1992-97). This phenomenon was seen as a remarkable leap for the country that has moved from no private press to having lots of them (Shimelis, 2002:184). Between 1992 and February 2005, more than 630 newspapers and 130 magazines had got press license, of which 401 newspapers and 130 magazines were published and circulated (Negussie, 2006:32). Generally, the period saw the emergence of a numbers of newspapers and magazines, though most of the publications were short lived.

Inadequate market research, inadequate finance, lack of skilled manpower and competent leadership hampered the survival of many of the newspapers (ibid) while a few have gone out of print because of the stiff competition and escalating cost of paper and printing; and some considered this as government's strategy to indirectly obstruct the fast growing private press (Costantinos et al, 1994:289).

In addition to the lack of resources and readership, Aadland, Shimelis and Gebremdhin (as cited in Negeri, 2012:101) argue that there were also political reasons among the factors that contributed for the gradual disappearance of many of the newspapers. What is more, Shimelis (2002:184) stresses that the decrease in the number of the newspapers was mainly due to market instability and government pressure.

Though most of the newspapers claimed independence, calling themselves "Free Press," there was a tendency by most of them to incline towards the opposition and some played out as

advocate of certain political parties. According to Shimelis (2002:185), political motivation was the dominant drive to enter into journalism and/or to start a newspaper business than professional and economic motivations. After passing through a development process full of trials and tribulations, the private press came out as an outspoken partisan (shimelis, 2002:199) entity. In Aadland's words (as cited in Negeri, 2012:102), it was "private media" but not necessarily "independent media."

Because of the low status of the profession and weak financial capacity of the businesses, it was difficult to get qualified manpower with knowledge and skill that was required for standard editorial content production and the administration of finance, advertising and circulation. This was particularly true for the editorial staff where many newspapers were staffed with unqualified individuals or with no experience let alone training. This was a major hindrance for the development of newspapers (Shimelis, 2002:197). According to Costantinos et al (1994, P. 292),

Most of the news and articles, mainly reported in the private press, are sensitive political issues that government papers or media do not dare to raise. They are made out of information often acquired from opposition sources both at home and abroad with little news value. The private press has now become a public eye, at times seeing through colored glasses. Its popularity is ever increasing not because of the high standard of journalism they display, but because the government press has failed to offer a better alternative.

As far as Shimelis (2002:185) is concerned, the early days of the private press was characterized by journalistic practice of two batches: those whose experience dates back in the dergue, even the imperial regime, and those ambitious but inexperienced young journalists, who came to the

scene after a couple of years of its start. As Skjerdal (2012:20) further argues, though difficult to conclude that the latter group had noticeable political motive, it did have profit making interest.

Financial constraint attributable to very limited commercial advertizing and the discrepancy between revenue and expenditure, which is a common characteristic of newspaper business, further made the media situation much worse .As Shimelis (2000, p. 62) put it,

The gap has to be bridged, for the paper to survive, by other means, ranging from the most common to the least and unethical one: commercial advertising; subsidy by government, organizations and individuals; and blackmail and payments for publication or suppression of news reports or articles. While subsidy and unethical practices are less common (though the latter tend to be prevalent in some cases), commercial advertising, a fundamental factor behind the success or failure of a newspaper business, is very limited.

There is a belief that these papers are of low standard, always at logger heads with the government, full of political scandal and focus on sexual content; such a belief discourages advertising of both private and government companies out of fear of association with the papers (as Ethiopia cited in Shimelis, 2000:62).

The market push had an impact to the point where distributors-publishers would force papers to fabricate news, which they believe would catch readers' attention and make it to the front page. This was all done at the expense of professionalism. As a result, the line between fact and fiction, subjectivity and objectivity has been blurred (ibid, pp. 64-65).

Its confrontation with the government was another challenge for the private media. According to Costantinos et al (1994:296), the private press has undertaken serious confrontations with the

government, often revealing major as well as minor political and economic blunders committed by the government. Owing to its confrontational stand, Shimelis (2002:199) characterized the private press as being born as a rebel. This phenomenon subjected its journalists to be the victims of government intimidation and detention. Consequently, Ethiopia has always been mentioned in the reports of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) and other human rights organizations for being at the top of the list among countries for jailing journalists, bringing “the vital shortcomings” of the 1992 press law to surface (Skjerdal, 2012:21; Costantinos et al, 1994:295).

Although the 1992 press law was considered a milestone for the abolition of pre-publication censorship and for its recognition the citizens’ right to have a media outlet, which had undergone severe restrictions under the previous regimes, it has remained a long lasting constraint on the media, i.e., it has served as an instrument of prohibition and punishment instead of being an instrument of regulation (Costantinos et al, 1994:295; Shimelis, 2002:194; Skjerdal, 2012:21).

Along the same line, Costantinos et al (1994, p. 295) argues that “At the outset the Press Law has freed the press from the captivity of pre-print censorship. At a closer look, the Press Law itself is a contradictory legal document promulgated primarily for political expediency than purely out of a genuine desire to promote press freedom.”

Among the serious shortcomings of the press law was its confusion in defining defamation and incitement to ethnic conflict which subsequently has led to the persecution of journalists on loose grounds (Skjerdal, 2012:21), precipitating the reduction of the number of publications. However, this state of affair could not be attributable solely to the government crackdown; the newspapers were also struggling financially from the start.

The situation got worse when in 1999, the Mass Media License Registration and Control Department in the Ministry of Information and Culture came up with a requirement of annual licensing renewal fee of Ethiopian birr 10,000, which was unaffordable for most of the financially weak media (Ellene et al cited in Skjerdal, 2012:22).

The private press's battle against the concurrent waves of government pressure and market constraints finally resulted in the extinction of vulnerable business, and soon, the newspaper market reached its equilibrium; during this time, stable newspapers like Addis Admas (Amharic), Fortune and Capital (English medium businesses papers) came to exist around 2000 (Skjerdal, 2012:22 & 23).

The early days of the independent press were, thus, characterized by low level of professional standard reflected in "rampancy of misquoting, misinterpreting, and plagiarism, the focus on trivial issues, poor layout, subjectivity, sensationalism, fixation on most sordid and volatile issues, obscenity and outright lies" (as ODA, Tedbabe, cited in Shimelis, 2002:198).

However, the press should be credited for its courage and contribution in reporting on topics of national concerns, such as political marginalization, power abuse, ethnic conflicts, corruption, economic mismanagement, and its advocacy for political liberalization, press freedom, human rights and national unity (Shimelis, 2000:68). As Costantinos et al (1994:293) argues, however, the news pieces of the newspapers, whether they were truth or pure fabrications, merit critical analysis.

Once again the newspaper market which was filled with energy and sympathetic to the opposition, reached its new peak when some papers aggressively increased their circulation on the eve of the 2005 National election (Yacob et al & Wondwosen cited in Skjerdal, 2012:23).

But the aftermath of the election left a detrimental impact on the private media. Tensions arose between the EPRDF and the opposition after the polling day, followed by polarization among the press when some private newspapers wrote about the success of the opposition while others questioned whether the election was fair. On the other hand, the state owned media claimed the victory of the ruling party. In the meantime, the government reacted against the private press with a heavy hand. The government's crackdown on the private press following the 2005 election, led to long-term imprisonment of 14 journalists and media owners along with 62 opposition members and supporters of the main opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (Skjerdal, 2012: pp. 24-25).

However, all convicted journalists were released on presidential pardon after two years of imprisonment; generally, the event had a chilling effect on the private press in terms of being daring to be sympathetic of the opposition parties as well as to be critical of the government. A number of newspapers were forced to close as a result of the detention of their publishers and editors (Skjerdal and Hallelujah cited in Skjerdal, 2012:25). This is not to absolve the private press of its culpability for the dark shadow that befallen it. In fact as wondwosen (cited in Skjerdal, 2012:25) pointed out, poor journalistic standard and lack of professional ethics were also among the contributing factors behind many of the closures.

The 1992 press law, which was initially hailed as a landmark in the history of the Ethiopian media, but later turned out to be a tool for suppression, was replaced by a new media law (Proclamation no. 590/2008, 'A Proclamation to Provide for Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information') which came out in 2008. To its credit, the new law came up with significant improvements in various respects. It prohibited pre-trial detention of journalists; it abolished the licensing of newspapers; it provided for the right to form professional associations;

and it guaranteed access to information (Skjerdal, 2012, pp. 25-26). However some restrictive provisions were sustained in the new media law, of which the opening for criminal defamation and harsh punishments for false accusations have received the most attention (Ross cited in Skjerdal, 2012:26).

As Skjerdal (2012:17) argues, the development of the Ethiopian private media is generally characterized in terms of its high and low points in its relation with the government and with respect to professionalism. For years, there have been repeated government crackdowns on the private media; and the government's use of the anti-terrorism law to crackdown on the private media has been a recent phenomenon reflecting a similar trend (ibid: 29). What is more, the arrest of three journalists and six bloggers in April 2014 was the latest incident of such type (*Reporter*, 2015:1).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Media independence and freedom from possible influences of ownership, government and other interest groups is considered a vital element in journalism, for without this, it is virtually impossible to sustain journalism as a truth seeking enterprise. Without independence and freedom, the media would forfeit the responsibility of putting the public interest first and would end up being an instrument of promoting other interests.

Unfortunately, however, media content globally has never been free from the influence of economic and political actors as well as from organizational and professional factors. It is often lamented that those with economic or political power exert considerable influence on news reporting across the globe, and the Ethiopian media is no exception.

Although independence is very crucial for the media in order to effectively play its watchdog role, previous studies show that independent reporting in the Ethiopian media has been under serious threat. Both the private and state owned media are being influenced by various actors and interrelated factors.

According to a study (Yetenayet, 2008:4) conducted to evaluate the extent to which the presence of the influence of political authorities was hampering independent political news reporting of two national Amharic newspapers, *Addis Zemen* and *Reporter*,⁷ influence of political authorities was found to be seriously damaging the political news reporting of the two papers although it was more severe in the case of the state owned *Addis Zemen* than in the case of the privately owned *Reporter*. The same study has further identified the influence of political officials as an impediment to the exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech and of the Press as well as the public's right to know.

Although this and other studies on media independence acknowledge the existence of other factors that hinder journalistic independence, some focus only on a comparison of government influence on contents of private and state owned newspapers, while others examine organizational factors threatening journalistic independence in the mass media agencies controlled by the regional states.

Despite the difference in their focus and methodologies, the studies have identified government officials' influence, financial interest of journalists, the influence of journalists' relatives and friends, self-censorship, self-interest of journalists and pressures from editors and bosses/owners as factors hampering journalistic independence.

However, the studies have not paid attention to if and how news management of public relations officers of external forces and sources exert influence on independent news reporting by the media.

As Watson (1996: 166) notes, different groups in a society try to suppress what they consider “bad news” while pressing “good news.” And getting a story, preferably a favorable one, about ones group in the news is called news management, and most of the time, this news management is the task of authoritative sources and spin doctors.

On the other hand, Ethiopia is becoming one of the best investment destinations for Asiatic and European investors particularly owing to its lower labor cost and political stability in the volatile East African region. Currently mega national projects sourced and outsourced to various competing local and international companies are underway. Similarly, investments by multinational corporations and private sectors are expanding in the country.

According to the Ethiopian Investment Commission’s 2013/14 annual official report, the Commission (EIC) has issued new investment licenses to 667 foreign investment projects during the last Ethiopian fiscal year. The projects are expected to create employment opportunities for an estimated 42,868 Ethiopians when they become fully operational. The 264 projects in operation have already created employment opportunities for 20,683 citizens. Such developments in the economic arena can be of potential concern for exerting pressure on the media by powerful actors in the sector.

Furthermore, there has been a proliferation of event management organizations, such as advertizing and promotion agencies, having close contacts with media houses as well as with journalists. How such close relationships might be affecting the reporting of news by the press is

another legitimate concern. Moreover, recent developments in media and communication environment and how such developments are affecting news reporting is also an issue worth considering.

Another thing worth noting while paying attention to journalists' information source is the implication of the 2008 media law with respect to the public relations work of the government. As Skjerdal (2012:34) argues, though there was a delay to start the groundwork for the implementation of the section of the law that focuses on access to information, later the government trained public relation officers in mass. The interaction of government public relations officers with the news media and the implications of such relations for independent news reporting is an area of concern.

Thus, this study aims at filling the gaps by examining what influence external forces and sources exert on the news reporting in *Reporter (Amharic version)*, *Fortune* and *Capital* newspapers, all of which are privately owned. Further, the study would re-examine factors, such as journalists' financial and self interests identified (in previous studies reviewed in this section) as an impediment to journalistic independence in light of the recent changes noted above. The study would compare the forms, the extent and the overall impact of the influence on independent news reporting of the target newspapers.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

The study aims at examining external influences on the news reporting of *Reporter (Amharic version)*, *Fortune*, and *Capital* newspapers and how the papers' journalists deal with such

influences. Though there are different internal and external influences that threaten independent news reporting, the study focused on the external influence.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Identify major external influences that affect news reporting of the selected newspapers.
- Examine how influence of external forces impact independent news reporting of the selected newspapers
- Examine how reporters and editors of the selected newspapers are dealing with the external influences in reporting news.

1.4 Research questions

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- Which external influences do affect news reporting of the selected newspapers more?
- How do external influences affect independent news reporting of the selected newspapers?
- How do reporters and editors of the selected newspapers deal with external influences?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Since influences on media content can be exerted in an obscure and complicated ways, the study will provide insights for both reporters and editors in understanding the ways different actors and factors affect news reporting. Knowing this fact will help journalists to be conscious of influences and interference of external forces in every part of the news making process. It will

also provide journalists and media houses with insights on how to be conscious of external ties and news sources and strive to maintain the balance in favor of journalistic independence.

Since the private print media sector is often said to side with parties other than the government (as described in detail in the first part of this chapter), findings from this study might also give some insights to the publishers on how these influences might be working against their major vision of telling the truth. The findings of the study would help the media houses to encourage journalists and editors to come up with some sort of guidelines and approaches to better identify and address the problem when it arises. Furthermore, the study will serve as a spring-board for those who might be interested in conducting a further study on the issue.

1.6 Scope of the study

There are various internal influences on media content that arises from ownership, journalists' personal values and beliefs and political inclinations among others. It is known that both internal and external influences threaten independent reporting of newspapers. This study is limited only to external influences for the sake of focus. For a similar reason, the study is limited to only three selected newspapers. In other words, the study focuses *Reporter* (Amharic biweekly), *Addis Fortune* and *Capital* (both of which are weekly English medium) newspapers. In the selected newspapers, the study focuses only on news and does not consider other pages.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Although attempt was made to look at factors like orientation, medium of language, circulation, readership and other factors in order to make the sample more representative, the findings of this study would primarily be more applicable to the newspapers included in the study although they

may be, to some extent, relatable to those print media that share a similar nature (nature of ownership, for instance,) as those in the sample.

Factors that influence content work out in a more complex and inter-related ways and this may require a holistic approach to investigating external influences through examining the news making process as a whole. However, for the sake of focus, the study focuses only on influences on news reporting of the newspapers under consideration.

As the issue under study could be directly or indirectly related to reporters' and editors' work ethics and personal interest, ownership interference, marketing, and level of professionalism, the informants might consider the issue sensitive and might not be forthcoming in their discussion with a stranger (the researcher).

1.8 Organization of the paper

The paper has five chapters; the first introductory chapter provides an extensive background on the private media in Ethiopia. The second chapter deals with the review of related literature and the theoretical framework that informs the study. Chapter three deals with the research methodology and tools used in the study. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis, presentation of the data and discussions of the findings; and the fifth chapter provides conclusion and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the review of literature related to the topic is provided. Furthermore, the most relevant theoretical framework informing the study is discussed.

2.1 Symbiotic relationship of the press with the powerful actors

The media performs in a context where it is engaged in relationships with different actors in a given system. In this context, issues related to whose values become more salient and whose values are suppressed or undermined? What values should be on the media's agenda? Who or what sets the media's agenda? And How is the media integrated within the power balance framework? form basic questions frequently asked by scholars.

Most scholars have tried to explain the form and the mechanism the relationship plays out with respect to power. In *Manufacturing consent: the political economy of mass media*, Herman and Chomsky (2002: xi) argue how the media work in favor of the elites. They assert that the media serve and propagandize on behalf of powerful groups in a society that control and finance it. And representatives of these groups, who have special interest to advance, are structurally well positioned to constrain the media activity and influence content in a systematic way that workouts through reporters' and editors' selection and prioritization of news as well as definition of newsworthiness than through direct intervention. Herman & Chomsky (2002) further explain how the media is structurally situated to serve the interest of the dominant group.

External influence here is defined as the capacity or power of an individual or groups outside media organizations to be a compelling force on the opinion and actions of journalists to have an outcome which favors their interest. Though it's a complex concept, power can be defined as the ability to get what one wants as (Parenti, 1978 cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:55).

In their propaganda model, an analytical framework (which is going to be discussed in the last part of this chapter), Herman & Chomsky explain how institutional structures and their relation with different groups and integration with the wider system influence the functioning of the US media. They examined structural factors that enable the powerful to influence media to promote their interest in a systematic way.

Media's integration into the dominant political economy of a given system and its relation with the elite is viewed in terms of symbiosis, characterized by structural factors such as ownership and control, media's dependence on advertisers as a major funding source and its mutual interest relationship with those who make the news and have the power to define i.e information sources. In this symbiotic relationship the media operate for the continuation of the narratives of the existing dominant group through mobilization of support. Access to the media, story selection, emphasis and omission by the media as well as what journalists do, their judgments of newsworthiness, and what they take for granted as premises of their work can be explained in terms of incentives, pressures, and constraints (ibid).

Gans (2004:8) argued that there is a need to examine people or actors that populate the news and activities that qualify to be newsworthy in order to know how society in general and different groups in particular are being covered in the news, in his analysis of CBS, NBS, Newsweek and Time, in *Deciding What's News*. He also noted that cooperating with the powerful considered as a viable strategy by the media to avoid the pressure that comes from the powerful even if the cooperation is not only limited to this aim(ibid:270).

Although the powerful, educated and people with authority have managed to establish mutual relationship with the media because of their position in a society, ordinary citizens are often

being marginalized from even getting access because they lack expertise, authority and power(Campbell,2004:83).

Among the structural factors, in their study of media content and the influence that shape it, in *Mediating The Message: Theories of Influence on Mass Media Content*,(Shoemaker&Reese,1996:221) viewed ownership as a primary means through which the powerful exert control over media institutions and capitalist owned media institutions decision and in effect content will have consistent tendency of favoring those with economic power. Most often media elites happen to be those with the expertise to define what an action is and information originates from. As Ericson et al. (1989, quoted in Campbell 2004:83) “The media elite are not separate from the elite who control many of the government and corporate bureaucracies that are reported on. They interlock with this organization in ownership, management participation and social participation.”

Reese (2014:309-311) acknowledges setting the media’s agenda per se is an exercise of power in his work *Setting The Media’s Agenda: A Power Balance Perspective*. And to do so some organizations are more powerful than others and many compete to get on the agenda while getting it favorable for their interest. However Reese shared Herman& Chomsky’s view of power relations between the media and advertisers and sources(The powerful)by confirming that the relationship is based on interdependency and symbiosis, his view of power imply neither the media nor the dominant group are inherently powerful. He rather argued that the balance of power shifts in the relationship and the powerful cannot be able to exercise their power all the time. Nonetheless the powerful can manipulate the media but under some conditions media assert their own power and agenda.

Since many actors (Private firms, Charities, scientific research bodies, activist etc.) want publicity and coverage, they use their maximum effort including their power (Campbell, 2004:81&Gans, 2004:249). Similarly elites who always want to manage news and opinion in their favor contend with each other often through the media for favorable coverage, according to paltez & Entman (1981,cited in Reese,2014:310). In this struggle over what message to transmit, journalists' power can stem from their ability and judgments about what is newsworthy and to be published (Gans, 2004:249).

Though mostly it's the agenda and interest of the powerful that prevails over the media, there also a space for coverage that question the existing dominant ideologies. As Herman & Chomsky (2002:xu) argued this information treated in a way so as to keep it at margins and its appearance is not intended to reflect alternative view rather to legitimize the functioning of the system by showing that it is not uniform.

Cook (1989 as cited in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:40) confirms that challengers of the status quo have less authority than incumbents and are therefore less likely to be considered as newsworthy. Similarly as Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott (1982 cited in ibid: 221) stated it, in this symbiotic relationship the role of the media is legitimating the system through the propagation of false consciousness, in the interests of the class which owns and controls the media i.e. the powerful. To do this, the media must overlook class struggle that are at the heart of a Marxist view of society.

Regarding alternative views or deviance, media's action is not limited only to legitimization but also use it as reference to tell what is normal by showing what is deviant and unacceptable. Similarly it gives some importance to some people and groups by frequently portraying them in

powerful position while marginalize others by ignoring or presenting them as less important. As Shoemaker & Reese (1996:43&44) stated this kind of treatment of deviance in the news is important characteristic of media content and deviant often being stereotyped by the media as dangerous and unconventional. Deviant in its psychological context refers to mental illness and political deviance is an emphasis in ideological analysis of the press. The treatment of deviance in the news as Gans (2004)put it,

If a news story deals with activities which are generally considered undesirable and whose description contain negative connotations, then the story implicitly expresses a value about what is desirable. In the process, the news also assumes a consensus about values that may not exist, for it reminds the audience of values that are being violated assuming the audience shares these values (p.40).

Shoemaker & Reese (1996:210) examined a range of influences on media content from outside hierarchically(ideological, extramedia, organizational ,media routines and individual levels)by putting light on how sources constrain information in order to get what they want in the news and how content is influenced through journalists selection of sources and how interest groups organize their effort to influence content. Self censoring content resulted from media's refrain from publishing information in fear of economic retaliation from advertisers i.e pulling ads. On the other hand organization of events and manipulating other routine channels of news gathering is one way of Public relations influence on content work out consistently.

Media content is a reflection of power asymmetry in society and has links to interests. The power is played out through the media and can explain how that information came to exist in the first place. Not only in the news about the powerful, but also power is explanatory of the general

trend in structuring of stories so that events are interpreted from the perspective of powerful interests (ibid:215,Gans,2004:30).

Shoemaker & Reese examined each type of influence on media content hierarchically so as with external influence on content, it seems because each type of influence has a dimension that interrelate with the other. Similarly external influences work in away with and /or with the internal ones. According to Reese (2014:309) the interdependence and symbiosis between the media and the powerful can be examined at individual, organizational and institutional levels.

2.1.1. News sources and Sourcing

Before discussing who news sources are and what makes them news source, it is appropriate to define what News is. News, as political scientist Leon Sigal (1986 cited in Schudson,2003:134) says, “is not what happens but what someone says has happened or will happen.” This implies that to understand news there is a need to look at whom the “Someone” s are to act as sources and how journalists deal with them.

Some view News as an outcome of a deal between journalists and sources while others view it as a representation of who the legitimate “knowers” are in a society and what their version of reality looks like as noted by Ericson, Baranek & Chan (as cited in ibid). On the other hand, Gans(2004)define news as,

information which is transmitted from sources to audiences ,with journalists who are both employees of the bureaucratic commercial organizations and members of profession- summarizing ,refining and altering what becomes available to them from sources in order to make it more suitable for audiences(p.80).

Though the notion that journalists convey information from sources to audiences suggests simple unidirectional process of information transmission, he stressed that the process is complicated by a number of factors.

It seems that it is this complexity of news production process that forced scholars to shift their focus of study from media effect to content production. Rees(2014:309) explains media agenda and actors and activities in the news has two linkages, forward linkage of effects and backward linkage of influence on content. And just like media message may signify powerful effect on audience similarly it mirrors the powerful influence behind its creation. In recent years communication scholars who started to look at this backward linkage towards the origin of media content and agenda are convinced that its equally important to examine content production process after confirming media did have effect as stated by McCombs (1988 cited in *ibid*:310).

The term “media sociology” applied to researches that look in to influences on media content in general and news in particular and such researches question in what process and activities contents come to exist at the end (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:5, Gans, 2004:8). As pioneers of such kind of contemporary studies (White,1950 and Breed,1955 cited in Shoemaker& Reese,1996:5) puts it, their suggestion of these studies can be classified based on journalists role of gate keeping and judgment of what is “News”, their socialization to their job affect content, followed by studies that looked at how journalists, editors, organizational structure and the society itself influence media content.

Political economists Murdock and Golding (1997:4) argue that in order to be accurate, an analysis of news production needs to examine economic context, as well as the class base, of control and power. Very few studies have looked at news production from this perspective,

starting with the news source rather than the news reporter and those studies that didn't consider the political economy of the media and considered news production beginning in the newsroom rather than in the power houses of society have been criticized as "too media-centric" as stated by Schlesinger (1990 cited in Schudson ,2003:135).

Sourcing have strengthened as a mechanisms of elite influence over the past decades and limitation in media resource made the media more dependent on press release and planned events that enabled the sources to have the capacity to influence content. On the other hand the public relation firms similarly working for the interest of the powerful became dominant as major sources. (Herman & Chomsky, 2002:XVIII).In addition to limitation of time and money the regularity of news publication made media organizations thirsty for readily available and continuous flow of information and correspondingly government officials(most of the authorized knowers),professional associations ,politicians and public relation offices are always ready to fulfill this role by making information readily available so that the media can swallow it easily(Schudson,200:134). As (Gans, 2004) put it,

Sources are also often members or representatives of organized and unorganized interest groups, and yet larger sectors of nation and society. They are actors whom journalists observe or interview, including who can be quoted in (different media outlets), and as well as those who can only supply background information or story suggestion (p. 80).

In addition "Sources are the deep, dark secrets of the power of the press. Much of this power is exercised not by the news institutions themselves but by the sources that feed them information" said Schudson (2003:134).

As Ericson et, al. (1989 cited in Campbell, 2004:81) noted , news production that involve source will be influenced by the source in some way when the source try to get favorable representation in the news.

Gans (2004,9-13) noted journalists' heavy reliance on sources and found out that the news is dominated by the "Known", already prominent people (71 percent of television stories, 76 percent of magazine columns quote these people as sources). These "known"s consist of incumbent presidents, presidential candidates, leading federal officials, state and local officials, and alleged and actual violators of the laws and more ("well-known people who get in trouble with the law or become enmeshed in political scandal"). The "unknowns"(representing about a fifth of coverage) consist of five types: (1) protesters, rioters, strikers; (2) victims; (3) alleged and actual violators of the laws and more; (4) voters, survey respondents, and other aggregates; and (5) participants in unusual activities.

Sigal (1973) shared Gans's view as cited in (Shoemaker&Reese,1996:46) , confirming official news sources dominance in his study of The Washington post and The New York Times. According to his study American and foreign government officials accounted three fourth of all news sources and 60 percent of news stories are resulted from routine, source controlled channels i.e.Official proceedings, press conferences, and press releases.

When it comes to the Ethiopian context, in her research "the influence of political authorities on political news reports in *Addis Zemen* and *Reporter*, Yetenayet (2007:98) confirmed that for stated owned *Addis Zemen*, there is heavy reliance on official views, official sources, official speeches and press release. In the contrary it is stated that *Reporter* , a privately owned paper,

entertains different views relatively. However the research reveals that there is clear presence of political authorities influence on both newspapers.

Another research that attempts to investigate the degree of anonymous source usage in state owned *Herald* and the private *Fortune* newspapers reveals that heavy reliance on government official sources by *Herald* while *Fortune* encompasses more diverse personalities including named government officials and anonymous individuals, though the newspaper's frequent use of anonymous sources referred partial and ambiguous sourcing in the research (Tizita, 2008:87-88).

2.1.1.1 Journalist–Source Relationship

Although there are different views on who has the upper hand in journalist source relationship, more or less there is an agreement that news generation is at the center of the link between journalists and sources (as Ericson, et al, 1989 cited in Schudson,2003:150).

Journalist–source relationship is complicated and characterized by cooperation and manipulation. Gans (2004:81) who stresses that the values of the audiences for news organizations financial destiny, argues that source, journalist and audience coexist in a system though it is full of struggle. And most often who comes out as winner in the struggle is determined by power among other factors.

Narrowing down the scope of the relationship, Gans (ibid: 116) said, “The relationship between sources and journalists resembles a dance, for sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not sources do the leading”

However, it cannot be said sources are powerful all the time and it is most likely that power of one kind or another can be a means to gain access and sources' effectiveness in getting access to journalists and/or news organizations can be determined by four interrelated factors among others. (1) incentives (2) power (3) the ability to supply suitable information and (4) geographic and social proximity.

Incentives: It can vary for individuals or organization. Personal gain, publicity and reputation can be motives behind the need for access.

Power: Is essential for sources generally in their relation with journalists and in determining whether they can get access frequently.

Ability to supply suitable information: Some organizations can provide information carry out nearly investigative journalism. Sources that can give suitable information and can overcome deficiency of power.

Geographic and social proximity: Sources may fulfill the other criterion but they must be geographically and socially be close to journalists.

From these factors, the ability to give suitable information is decisive, despite the fact that the cumulative of the rest can enhance this ability (ibid: 117).

In addition to the above determinants from the sources' perspective, there are factors that contribute for journalists' exposure to source influence. Routine news gathering practices are significant factors that position journalists in a situation that sources can take advantage of among other things. As Campbell (2004:84) emphasized even in the case of small, local news

media, routines of news gathering can have consequences for the relationship between journalists and sources.

These routines as (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:15) said are: “Habituals, ongoing, patterned procedures that are accepted as appropriate professional practice. These include gate keeping, beat system, balancing sides in issue stories and reliance on authoritative sources. Routine like this can help journalists to claim of accuracy and objectivity.”

The assignment of journalists to particular subjects, or beats is at the center of journalist–source relationship. The routine of covering specific subject area will result in journalists becoming ever more familiar with the practice and individuals in the area; in effect journalists are more advantageous to get inside information and regular access to official documents (Campbell, 2004:84).

But this, journalists becoming allies of sources through a process , as Gans (2004:144) calls it “going native” has a disadvantage as also noted by (Ericson et al.,1989 quoted in Campbell,2004:84) “On beat journalists are not only physically part of the source organization, but over time become part of it socially and culturally. They become socialized into the occupational culture of sources on the beat to the point where the relation between their understanding and values coheres with that of their sources.” Darton (1975) shares the idea, stressing on the point that reporters’ familiarity over a long period of time (Beat) is more effective in influencing content than outright manipulation (as cited in Schudson, 2003:147).

According to Gans (2004:133), beat reporters are involved in a symbiotic relationship of reciprocal obligations with their sources, which can equally facilitate and hamper their work. Furthermore Hall et al., (1978) considered such kind of journalist–source relationship as

extremely negative. In their model of ‘primary definition’ they argue that institutional sources like the government not only frequently access news because of their power, but their opinions (narrative) regarding controversial issues will be accepted as a definition (as cited in Campbell,2004:86).

In some countries such kinds of journalist–source relationships are more routinized. A team of reporters from different news organizations form formal associations of journalists and are assigned to a particular government offices and cover issues in a manner of uniformity. For example there are: Kisha Club in Japan, Foreign Affairs Journalists in the Netherlands, White House Press Corps, the Westminster Lobby Correspondents and Brussels Press Corps (Schudson:138 & 139, Campbell, 2004:90).

The sources can also punish reporters by denying access and withholding information and this can worry media executives when the competitors are getting the inside story that they do not have (Schudson, 2003:142, Gans, and 2004:134).

In selecting sources journalists do their own calculation based on interrelated considerations. Gans (2004:128-131) lists major six considerations. (1) Past Suitability (2) Productivity (3) Reliability (4) Trustworthiness (5) Authoritativeness (6) Articulateness.

2.1.2 Public Relations Influence

It was difficult for scholars to come up with an agreeable definition of public relations (as stated by Thurlow, 2009:246; Lomme & Russell, 2010:284 cited in Zemedkun, 2014:10). But Hendrix (2004:2) suggests that one way of defining public relations is inverting the term so as to get it as “relations with the public” and this reflects the concept “interrelationships with the public.”

The term public relations includes a wide range of activities, from "the simple mailing of press releases plugging orchestras and activist groups to giant campaigns that generate ink and air time for celebrities, products, and political positions" (as stated by Bleifuss,1994 quoted in Reese & Shoemaker,1996:179).

The relationship between media and other institutions has become more routinized with the rise of public relations practice. According to Schudson (1978 as cited in *ibid*:122) in the early 20th century news organizations heavily relied on speeches, press releases and even handouts and this in turn contributed for the strengthening of public relations efforts. This wave of press release and press conference impacted investigative journalism and concurrently, dependence on public relations information made journalists more vulnerable for manipulation.

Public relations serves a range of institutions in a society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary/professional associations, foundations, hospitals as well as educational and religious institutions (Hendrix, 2004:3) and these organizations attempt to be in the news while trying their best to manage the news in their favor.

According to Schudson (2003:136), this task is generally handled by public relations departments or firms and they realize this through establishing good relations with reporters and editors. As a major source of information through press release, public speeches, public legislative hearings, government sources are at the front line.

In this regard, public relations offices of universities and colleges compete in the market place of opinion to put positive news of their institutions in the news while suppressing news of plagiarism scandal, toxic waste disposal from scientific laboratories, and rape or murder that had

happened in their premises. Sending press releases about Nobel Prizes, best scores and organizing media events are among the ways they use to achieve this mission (ibid:135).

In most cases public relations officers are former journalists and because of this their chance to have similar news judgments and mutual understanding with journalists is high (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:179). However, contrary to this, Gans (2004:122) argued that in most cases reporters try to avoid public relations officers by directly approaching the heads of organizations or executives though they end up facing similar manipulation since the latter's primary duty is also public relations.

Interest groups use public relations campaigns to influence content directly through tailoring information that the press can swallow easily or try to catch media's attention indirectly. In the latter's case journalists themselves can be targets of the campaign (Shoemaker & Reese 1996:177). Organizing events, which the media will cover is one way of public relations effort to influence content directly.

According to Gans (2004:122) media events are events orchestrated by public relations in order to be covered by news organizations. Boorstin (1964) call these kinds of prescheduled stages "pseudo-events" and suggest that they should not be considered as news (as cited in ibid:123, Keir et.al, 1986:8).

Schlesinger who defined news as "the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality" explains that journalists exercise this power. But when they cover an event which is preplanned primarily to catch media attention, then journalists abdicated their power to those with economic or political power (as cited in Keir et.al, 1986:7&8).

When it comes to the public relations' influence on content there are different views. As explained by Turk (1986, cited in Shoemaker&Reese), for instance, the problem is not only newspapers' reliance on public relations generated ready-made information but their coverage of issues with the same angle and degree of emphasis. Contrary to this though, Stocking (1985) questioned the degree of the impact of public relations on content and argued that public relations may not affect content apart from publicity of the values of their organizations (as cited in *ibid*).

With regards to the practice of public relations in the Ethiopian context, in federal government offices Zemedkun (2014:24) has mentioned Bereket Simon, the then minister of information as explaining (in his paper entitled "the future of the private press in Ethiopia and the government perspective" presented in 2003) how failure of the state as well as other state actors to provide information for the private press contributed partly for the weakness of the private press.

Though the beginning of the practice of public relations dates back to the 1960s it remained with low professional standard and could not go beyond serving the interest of the ruling elites (*ibid*:88).

Among the public relations officers and experts interviewed for his research entitled, *The practice and challenges of public relations in Ethiopian federal government offices*, 20% of respondents said that planning public relations activities is the most important part of their job while 18% said dealing with the media is their crucial activity (*ibid*:75).

2.1.3 Advertisers Pressure

Some view economic independence of the press as equally important as press freedom (political freedom) and accordingly they prefer to look at economic evolution of the press. In their book *Power without responsibility: The press, broadcasting, and new media in Britain*, Curran & Seaton (1981:5) stated that, during the second half of the eighteenth and at the beginning of nineteenth century, private media started to become politically independent as a result of increase in advertising revenue, which in effect reduced the media's dependence on government subsidies and secret service grants.

This followed by better salary for employees, greater expenditure on news gathering in order to avoid reliance on official sources which was forcing the media to negotiate its independence in the name of getting exclusive information. Nevertheless this delinking of the press from government and the growth of advertising did not transform the private press into an 'independent fourth estate'. Rather its allegiance with political parties and commercial considerations got their way to challenge the independence of the private press (ibid).

The private press primary operates in a commercial market place to win audiences, advertisers and news sources over other competitors and there are arguments regarding how the market place struggle among the media has implication on content. This market place struggle of media affect content in different ways as noted by McManus (1996, cited in Gupta, 1998:32). Similarly there are views that link advertisers and audiences to influence on media content. Altschull (1984) said: "The content of the press is directly correlated with the interests of those who

finance the press. The press is the piper, and the tune the piper plays is composed by those who pay the piper."(as quoted in Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:181).

According to McManus (1996), the reality of advertisers being the source of income for private press than audiences implies maximizing profit by providing low standard products for maximum number of audience, which has demographic importance because advertisers pay for the news organizations not because of their journalistic standard but because of the size of audiences of potential consumers they deliver to advertisers. And he concludes that economics of the private press works in favor of appeal to advertisers over audience and the choice to have large number of audience is not a matter of journalistic consideration rather commercial (as cited in Gupta, 1998:32 & 33).

Advertisers are aware that it is not a greater number of audience that is important for them but a group of audience, with purchasing power, i.e. target audience. As a result they buy space or air time from media that have potential target audience for their product (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:182).

When commercial newspapers focus more on advertising revenue because their survival is depending on it, there will be a move away from investigative reporting and independent journalism as Rykken (1992 cited in *ibid*: 186). The bigger the advertiser the greater the chance to use its power in influencing content to its favor and in this regard multinational companies and advertising agencies have significant power (*ibid*).

Gans (2004:256) stated that in 1970 the Coca Cola Company pressurized NBC to make some changes in its documentary titled "Migrant" that shows the situation of migrant workers. NBC prescreened the documentary and Coca Cola knew that there is a part in the documentary that

criticized its citrus farm in Florida and considered it harmful for the interest of the company. Finally, because it was a sponsor, its demands were met and it was successful in influencing the content.

Similarly, tobacco companies have a long history of influencing media content in their favor (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:186). These may not be examples of rare cases where advertisers use their power to get the news in their liking. Rather it is common for advertisers often to tell the media what they think and how they believe content should be altered or framed (ibid: 210).

According to Gans (2004:255), the issue here is not only multinational corporations' effort to enforce some changes in media content but also the fact that most private firms' are successful in hampering investigative reporting about business misdeeds. Since they have the economic leverage, advertisers do not hesitate to demand censorship, that can result in a chilling effect on journalists (ibid :257) while self censorship resulted from media's refrain from publishing an information considered against the interest of advertisers in fear of retaliation of advertisers by pulling ads (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:210). As Herman & Chomsky (2002) put it,

Censorship is largely self-censorship, by reporters and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organizational requirements, and by people at higher levels within media organizations who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints imposed by proprietary and other market and governmental centers of power.(p, Ix).

In a survey of 41 newspapers' real estate news staff, more than three-quarters of editors confirmed that advertisers had threatened to withdraw ads in retaliation to unfavorable coverage

while more than one-third said that ads had actually been pulled (as stated by Williams, 1992, cited in *ibid*:186).

In most cases, media houses surrender for advertisers and there are also cases in which businesses or sales departments influence editorial decision in order to increase audience size for the sake of attracting more advertisers (Gans, 2004:214, Shoemaker & Reese, 1996:210).

Gans (2004:256), who noted that advertisers need newspapers as much as newspapers need them, argues that in most cases advertisers and business corporations want to manipulate media houses so as to influence content rather than exerting power.

2.1.4 Government Control

Another influence on media content comes from government. Government control of the media directly or indirectly is a global phenomenon. It may be safe to say governments around the world exert control over the media despite the difference how they apply control. In countries where the media are largely privately owned, controls are exerted through laws, regulations, licensing processes and taxes. In countries where the media are predominantly government-owned, government control is exerted through media financing (Janus, 1984 cited in Sheomaker & Reese, 1996:190).

Government control of the media ranges from monopolization of the media to harassment. According to the prevailing political system, governments practice a range of means to control and obstruct independent media activities. As noted by (Nyamonajah, 2005; Tettey, 2006; Okigbo and, 2004, Hyden et al, 2002; MacNair, 2000; MacNair, 2003; Street, 2001) cited in Yetenayet (2008:29) monopolization of the media; strict control on the free flow of ideas (official secrecy, censorship, imposing self-censorship, etc); denying access to information and

audiences, devastating draconian media regulations (such as laws of secrecy, criminal libel charges, sedition and absence of information act); violation of their premises and equipment; physical harassment (threats) and real application; banning private news media from operation; confiscation of their properties and the like are major instruments used by political actors (governments).

Similarly, Gans (2004:160-163) noted that government officials may try to exert control over the media and express their discontent in five ways. (1) Complaining to news executives or gatekeepers. (2) Threatening media organizations if they are not willing to retract what they have already published in their liking. (3) Governments can threaten news organizations by starting investigation on them, in relation to crime that they are believed to be involved in. (4) Government can threaten the media by law suits. (5) Government officials try to pressurize media organizations by publicly criticizing them so as to generate a negative perception among the audience.

But governments not always try the above mentioned tools of exerting control or influence. Shoemaker & Reese (1996:196), for instance, stated that government influence on the media not always come through media laws and regulations rather they might use a less overt strategy to influence content through news leaks, “off the record” information from government officials, i.e. information designed to create impression of governments competence and efficiency.

In Ethiopia most of the instruments that are used by the government to exert control over the media resonate with the relationship the government has with the media house. In her study, which investigates and compares political authorities influence on political news reports of state-owned and private newspapers, Yetenayet (2008:98) confirmed the existence of government

influence through editorial policy, subsidiary laws, direct order from officials and the use of coercive force.

According to the research finding, *Addis Zemen*'s editorial policy has been designed in away to allow government interference through appointment of affiliated gatekeepers and to let the media organization to operate in line with the interest of the ruling class while *The Reporter*'s editorial policy is designed in a way to enable the media to serve as platform for different views. In effect it has an independent editorial policy and there is no political gatekeeping (ibid, 98 & 99)

Though the Ethiopian media have been constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression and freedom of the press, the exercise of these rights are constrained by proclamations incorporated in subsidiary press laws and regulations. The existence of such kinds of provisions, that are open for different interpretations thus abuse, paved the way for government officials to use the law as pretext to interfere in the activities of the media. In this regard frequent legal charges bought up against *Reporter* can be mentioned as a case. (ibid: 99 & 100).

However, the case of the existence of a direct order from government officials is less apparent on *The Reporter*. The study also revealed that there is rather a practice of self censorship. On the other hand the research indicate that government use of coercive force is less evident for *Reporter* while it is absent with regards to its state-owned counterpart. (ibid: 100 & 101).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

Though there are different theoretical perspectives on influence on media content, it is political economy of the mass media that the researcher believes is the most relevant one; and it is the most comprehensive theoretical framework to interpret the research questions of this study.

2.2.1. Political Economy of the Mass Media

Before passing on to discussing about the political economy of the mass media, it would be appropriate to look at what political economy is generally about. According to Mosco (1996:24), “political economy is the study of social relations, particularly the power relations, which mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources.” From this he considered communication outputs, such as newspapers, books, videos, films, and the audience, as the primary resources.

Similarly, political economists of the Communication discipline took a step in narrowing down the focus on media and communication. They looked at power relations and control behind communication production, distribution and consumption, ownership concentration and control over media content (ibid). A perspective that focus on ownership and control of the media in trying to understand the overall activities of the mass media is generally associated with the ‘political economy’ approach (Williams, 2003:73, Golding & Murdock, 1997:5).

Political economy theory suggests that the production of news, film, advertising, drama, popular music and generally media content is structurally constrained by economic and political factors, and this is true particularly for private ownership of media (as Franklin, 1997 cited in William, 2003:56).

As leading political economy theorists, Golding & Murdock (1997:3) said “The obvious starting point for a political economy of mass communications is the recognition that the mass media are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations that produce and distribute commodities.” They believe that economic base of the media is explanatory of the structure, shape and even the effect of its content.

The commodities produced by the media industry are different from those produced by other industries because the media produces goods that give an actual account and the picture of the real world. This, in effect, influences the ways in which people see, understand and determine the world. Hence, the ownership and control of the media is viewed not only as a crucial factor in deciding the structure, the functioning and output of the mass media, but also in the construction of the reality (the production of meaning) in society (Williams,2003:73). As Golding & Murdock (1997) also put it, “Media create and distribute many of the symbolic and cultural resources we require to make sense of the social world we inhabit. From the language we speak to the identities and institutions which constitute our social life, the media are often primary, and rarely less than contributory, providers of the building blocks of our experience”(p, xiii).

The term ‘political economy’ was first used by French writer, Monchretien de Watteville, in 1615 when he applied the term to explain the ‘science of wealth acquisition common to the state as well as the family’ (as Hoogvelt, 1997 cited in Williams, 2003:73). However, political economy as an approach to understand society and the polity was formally used at the end of the eighteenth century. Classical political economists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo, tried to explain the social changes that followed the industrial revolution by emphasizing the importance of economic organizations of society and the ways in which they shaped and determine social, cultural and social relations (as Mosco,1996 cited in *ibid*:74). Making their focus on the market they view, capitalism, as an effective system that generates wealth and maximizes the public good.

Classical political economy viewed private ownership as central to the operation of capitalism and this applied to all industries including the media. Until the early nineteenth century, there was a belief that there is a direct relation between private ownership and public performance and

to the extent that freedom of the press was viewed in terms of absence of government control. Nevertheless, soon challenges began to be seen when the reality in which newspapers owned by one individual or one family, relatively low cost to start up a newspaper, changed to a context where the costs of newspaper production is high which in effect prohibited most people from entering into the business; driving out small business and concentrating ownership in the hands of very few with the industrialization of the press becoming apparent (ibid).

However, both classical and Marxian political economy views shared the idea that capitalism has created wealth; the latter suggests that capitalism has also created huge disparity in the distribution of wealth and opportunities in the society (ibid: 75).

For Marx, the key feature in the development of capitalism was the ownership and control of the means of production by few people, the powerful, who levers the economic power, which is in their hands. And he viewed the media as a means of promoting certain ideas and values that these few people espouse by excluding alternative or opposing ideas. In manipulating the content of the media, the powerful seeks to make their view of the world accepted as a dominant. Generally, he viewed ownership and control of the media by few as a mechanism by which certain ideas can be promoted and power and privilege of few sustained (ibid: 75-76).

This kind of media ownership concentration and consolidation in Britain was first documented in the 1970s in the work of political economists Golding and Murdock (ibid: 78). Documentation of similar pattern of media ownership and control in the US relates to the works of Bagdikian in *Media Monopoly* published in 1983 (Herman and Chomsky, 2002:xiii).

But later, the documentation was further developed by the work of political economists Herman and Chomsky in 1988. In their propaganda model, they argued a range of economic, political and

organizational factors serve as filters to constrain media content in favor of those with money and power (ibid:2). Generally, the model explains forces that shape the action and content of the media. Essential elements of the propaganda model, the five filters that are being used by the American media which were controlled and supported by powerful elites to determine what is to be published are the following.

The first filter: Size, Ownership and Profit orientation of the mass media

In examining the development of media in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century, Curran & Seaton (1981) explained how small business were driven out leaving press ownership highly concentrated in the hands of few in detail in their work: *Power without responsibility: The press, broadcasting, and new media in Britain*. It became evident that though advertising liberated the press from government control and manipulation, it didn't transform them to be independent. But the newspapers turned to be loyal for political parties that funded them. Then the coming of radical newspapers, that proved newspapers could be independent from the government and political parties through financial support other than advertising, had challenged the existing perception that advertising was midwife of press freedom(ibid: 5).

But the radical press viewed as a threat to the interest of the ruling elite group and successive governments wanted to weaken it first through seditious and libel laws; and then through taxes and other financial duties with the objective of limiting readership and ownership by making publication cost high(ibid:6).

Later the radical newspapers were forced to increase their price to live up to publication cost and these newspapers, situated in a financially disadvantaged position, were eventually forced to close down and later this was followed by ownership concentration, cross ownership and even

media ownership by non-media corporations. And thus, this (the first filter) limitation on ownership, by making the financial requisite to enter into the media business and high taxes, is what Herman & Chomsky (2002:3) pointed out as how the market did successfully accomplish what state intervention failed to do.

Bagdikian emphasizes that though there were large media numbers, the twenty-nine largest media conglomerates account for over half of the output of newspapers, and most of the sales and audiences in magazines, broadcasting, books, and movies. He described the situation as "constitute a new Private Ministry of Information and Culture" that can influence the national agenda (as cited in *ibid*: 4).

Precisely, Herman & Chomsky analyzes how media control by few large business firms, ownership pattern, profit orientation and their overall integration with wider political and economic system affect media content and news selection using an element from their propaganda model, i.e., the first filter.

The second filter: The Advertising License to do Business

Newspapers can depend on two sources for finance, sales and advertising; and the latter has become more essential. Curran & Seaton (1981:28-29) analyzed the systematic role of advertisers and their impact on the media. Radical newspapers in Britain were driven out of business because their readers couldn't be advertising target audiences and at the end, this made it evident that advertisement is crucial in determining the viability of the press as a business. Further, advertisers did not only make their market calculation but also political consideration when they advertise, though implication of this is often overlooked due to the assumption that advertisers buy space from newspapers solely based on their market consideration.

The price of a newspaper had to cover the cost of the business before advertising became crucial. But with the expansion of advertising (advertising expenditure increased steadily in the Victorian and Edwardian period, rising to an estimated £20 million in 1907), papers with more ads managed to survive with a copy price well below publication costs, while this positioned those newspapers with no ads at a serious disadvantage. These papers were forced to increase their price. Thus, advertising had a powerful effect in driving radical newspapers out of the business. Finally, this had laid the grounds for a system where it is not the reader but the advertising that decides the fate of newspapers. In words of Curran & Seaton (1981:29) “Advertisers thus acquired a de facto licensing power because, without their support, newspapers ceased to be economically viable.”

Ultimately, economic discrimination coupled with political discrimination by advertisers required the radical press to make an effort to survive by changing its orientation and redefining its target audience, with an objective to attract the more affluent readers whom advertisers wanted to reach (ibid:30). As Herman & Chomsky (2002) put it,

In short, the mass media are interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audiences per se; it is affluent audiences that spark advertiser interest today, as in the nineteenth century. The idea that the drive for a large audiences makes the mass media more "democratic" thus suffers from the initial weakness, that it's political analogue, is a voting system weighted by income (p, 16).

The third filter: Sourcing Mass Media News

The Mass media have symbiotic relationship with powerful information sources, which is based on interdependency and reciprocity. Because of time constraint and resource limitation media

depend on these sources for its steady flow of information to meet its daily news demand. This is also considered to be a cost effective way of news gathering since investigating stories, checking and cross checking facts and interpreting raw data demands huge resource. Precisely, their economics determines where to deploy the limited resources, i.e., what is newsworthy. Presidential news conferences, city administrations and other government offices or business corporations' press conferences are among the focuses in this regard.

As Herman & Chomsky (2002:19) show in the application of their propaganda model that The White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department, in Washington, D.C., city hall and the police department, business corporations and trade groups are regular and credible sources of stories deemed newsworthy because of their status and reputation. In effect, they say,

the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news. The large entities that provide this subsidy become "routine" news sources and have privileged access to the gates. Non-routine sources must struggle for access, and may be ignored by the arbitrary decision of the gatekeepers (p, 22).

From this, they conclude that the subsidy is at the taxpayers' cost and this implies the citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interest of powerful groups.

As Fishman (1980) notes, it's given for the media and journalists to accept these bureaucracies account as factual (not as a claim but credible) because officials of such bureaus are considered as authorized knowers in the society. Reporters believe that officials should know what it is their job (as cited in *ibid*: 19). Another explanation for the heavy reliance on official sources is that the mass media wants to claim and maintain objectivity of its news concurrently making its ways

safe in the case of criticism and law suits by securing official document that is considered accurate (as Tuchman, 1972 cited in *ibid*).

The fourth filter: Flak and the Enforcers

Elites in the American mass media not only established a systematic way of dominating its agenda, but also the means of fixing principles that are violated by media coverage that is considered outside the mainstream. They have been doing so through various ways that can range from simple warning phone calls and letters to law suit and other punitive measures. This is not only fixing but also a way of disciplining the media for the future. This negative response to a media output is referred to as a "Flak". Flak can be organized or otherwise and similarly it can be direct or indirect. In the case of organized high level flak the media must justify its actions in the face of flak producers because of the repercussion. To produce flak, especially a serious one, it needs resources; so the a ability to produce flak is related to power (Herman&Chomsky,2002:26).

As Herman & Chomsky put it

The producers of flak add to one another's strength and reinforce the command of political authority in its news-management activities. The government is a major producer of flak, regularly assailing, threatening, and "correcting" the media, trying to contain any deviations from the established line. News management itself is designed to produce flak (p, 28).

The fifth filter: Anti-Communism as a Control Mechanism

Communism as an ideology has always been dangerous to the interest of the dominant group that controls the American mass media and the anti-communism control mechanism of the elite had a powerful influence on the media (ibid: 30). It may be safe to question the relevance of this last filter given the reality of the current media and politics. But, in Herring and Robinson (2003) words

Whilst there may be grounds for questioning the specific content of this filter following the collapse of most Communist states and the internal transformation in the direction of capitalism of many of those that remain, alternative ideological mechanisms, such as the current 'war on terrorism' have broadly the same effect upon news output(p,556).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Method

In this study, an attempt has been made to investigate influence on media content, specifically external influence on news reporting of newspapers. The study has employed a qualitative research approach and used qualitative tools of in-depth interview and focus group discussion for data collection.

There is no commonly accepted definition for qualitative research approach and some qualitative researchers consider defining it as limiting its scope (Yin, 2011:7; Wimmer & Dominic, 2011:114). Challenge to reach at clear and precise definition and fear of excluding disciplines since the approach is being applied in a range of disciplines are also major reasons behind the absence of agreed upon definition and even resistance to define it.

Yin suggests that it is better to emphasize on discussing the features of qualitative research instead of endeavoring to come up with an accepted common definition. And he puts, the features as:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions;
2. Representing the views and perspectives of the participants
3. Covering the contextual conditions within which people live;
4. Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to explain human social behavior; and
5. Striving to use multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone (p. 7-8).

But Creswell (2007:51-52) prefers to view qualitative research as an approach to inquiry that starts with assumptions, worldviews, possibly a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems searching the meaning individuals or groups give to a problem. With this approach, researchers collect data in natural settings with a sensitivity to the people under study, and they analyze their data inductively to establish patterns or themes.

Researchers use qualitative approach when problems or issues need to be explored but also it is best suited when there is a need to have a complex and detailed understanding of problems, when there is a need to understand contexts or settings in which participants deal with the issue and when quantitative measures or statistical analysis doesn't fit a problem (ibid: 40). Because of the nature of the issue and the above reasons, the researcher decided to use a qualitative research approach.

The sub-section below discusses in detail the tools of research used in this study and their relevance in answering the research questions.

3.1.1 Individual in-depth interview

The researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with 12 journalists who were purposively (as in-depth interviewing is typically done with a nonrandom sample) selected from the Newspapers that the study took as a case. i.e., *The Reporter* (Amharic), *Fortune* and *Capital* (both English medium).

Interviews particularly in-depth interviews are best methods applicable to the exploration of a more complex and subtle phenomena, when researchers need to gain insight into things like people's opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences (Denscombe, 2007:174). Similarly, in Wimmer & Dominick's (2011:139) words, in-depth or intensive interviews "provide detailed

background about the reasons respondents give specific answers. Elaborate data concerning respondents' opinions, values, motivations, recollections, experiences, and feelings are obtained.”

In-depth interviews are also said to be good data collection methods better exploited to get accurate response in the case of sensitive issues if conducted in a careful and considerable manner (Denscombe,2007:174, & *ibid*).

According to Yin (2011:32), because of its various attributes, interview particularly in-depth interview can be used as main data collection tool of qualitative studies that are interested in the interviewees' ideas, opinions and expressions than responses that can be put numerically.

Keeping this potential of in-depth interview in mind, the researcher in this study, has conducted in-depth interviews with news reporters, editors and editor-in-chiefs in order to get insights into influences from outside the news organizations on news reporting. Some of the interviewees were selected from focus group discussion members as primary participants.

Interview questions were semi-structured and unstructured. These type of semi-structured and unstructured interviews (qualitative interviews) enable interviewees to use their own expressions and develop their own thoughts and this is a better way of discovering things and complex issues (Denscombe, 2007:176&Yin, 2011: 135).

3.1.2 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussion (FGD) as method of data collection has been employed in this study primary for two reasons. As Wimmer & Dominick (2011:118) noted, qualitative data collection tools are useful mass media research tools only when their limitations are known. Accordingly, the first reason to use focus group discussion (FGD) is to fill the gap that might be created because of the shortcomings of interview data collection method. Individual in-depth interviews restrict the number of views and opinions available for researchers but focus group discussion (FGD) is practical solution for this shortcoming (Denescomb, 2007:177).

Since focus group discussion allows a broader spectrum of people's views and opinions to be reflected, it is used to enhance understanding and to reveal a wide range of opinions, some of which the researcher might not anticipate (ibid & Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:132).

The second rationale for using this tool is the purpose of getting general information about the issues that can be further investigated through individual in-depth interviews. As noted by Wimmer & Dominick, (2011:133), focus group discussions enable researchers to collect preliminary information that could be further investigated using other qualitative data collection tools about issues or phenomenon under study.

The benefits of focus group discussion (FGD), as noted by Denscombe (2007:179), are that the interaction in a focus group discussion helps researchers to understand the rationale behind the views and opinions of participants and factors that can explain the ideas reflected in the discussion. Comparing views in such interaction enables researchers to identify if there will be

consensus in some points as well as significant differences in viewpoints in the focus group discussion.

The researcher has conducted two focus group discussions (each group with four members) in one of the selected (the selection was based on convenience and it was not possible to conduct FGD in the other two media houses because they are staffed with few and inexperienced journalists. In addition meeting group of journalists at a time was difficult because of their tight schedule) news organizations under study, i.e. *The Reporter*. According to Denscombe (2007:181) focus groups sometimes consists of less than six members and mini focus groups of three or four people are used commonly in small scale social researches. The focus group discussion participants are selected purposefully based on their particular tasks and their relevance with regard to the issue under study. The researcher strongly believes that the participants are the right informants because of their task of news reporting and their experience in the field.

Similarly the researcher decided to make the focus group a small one on purpose. Considering sensitivity of the issue, the researcher has put members that are more likely to trust each other to be in the same group for the sake of free and an honest discussion as well as confidentiality. Though large focus groups seem to have advantage in terms of collecting data from wider pull, there are also other considerations that lead to have small number groups. As Denscombe (2007)puts it,

Larger numbers are more difficult to schedule.

Large groups can become unwieldy and hard to control.

Large groups cost more.

Large groups can inhibit contribution from less confident people.

Discussions within large groups are more difficult to record (p. 181).

As suggested by Wimmer & Dominick (2011:134), the researcher used a procedure known as extended focus group, in which participants are requested to fill a written questionnaire prior to the discussion session with an objective to get participants' genuine view in case there might be a tendency not to reflect one's own ideas or views if he/she will have entirely different opinion on some issues. The exercise of self-restraint due to the fact that someone is a minority is a potential problem that can arise from group dynamics in focus group discussion.

3.1.3 Sampling strategy

Depending on the purpose of the study, cost benefit analysis, time constraint and amount of acceptable errors, researchers can decide whether to use probability or non-probability sampling. Probability sampling uses statistical guidelines by means of which each unit's probability for selection is known. On the other hand, non-probability sampling does not follow the guidelines of numerical probability (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011:89-90).

Because of one of the above mentioned factors, mass media researchers commonly use non-probability sampling, specifically in the form of available or convenience sampling, a collection of available people and documents (ibid: 92). But researchers need to look beyond the positive feature of available sample since it has some serious risks associated with it as a technique before being used in a research (Berg, 2011:32).

So, to realize the aim of the study, the researcher of this study has employed purposive sampling throughout the study. Purposive sampling is sometimes called judgmental sampling and in employing a purposive sample, researchers use their information and special knowledge about some group to select subjects who represent a population (ibid). Yin (2011:88) further explains

that in qualitative research, the samples are likely to be chosen in a deliberate manner of purposive sampling. And the rationale for selecting the specific study units is to have participants/samples that will yield the most relevant and ample data, given the topic.

Accordingly, the researcher selected the newspapers, i. e., *The Reporter* (Amharic), *Fortune & Capital* (both English medium) through purposive sampling. The researcher believes that factors like orientation, medium of language, journalistic profile, circulation, readership and other factors can make the sample more representative of the Ethiopian private press.

When it comes to viability as a business and political inclinations of newspapers, Skjerdal (2012:23) stated that *Capital* and *Fortune* are among stable newspapers that came to exist around 2000 while *The Reporter* is labeled as a critical supporter of the ruling elite .It is also noted that the three newspapers have managed to attract a wider base of readership and advertising because of their solid journalistic profile (as Ward, 2011 cited in ibid).

"*Reporter*" is a bi-weekly Amharic political newspaper established in September 1995 and published by Media and Communications Center Plc. Its circulation is estimated to be 12,000-15,000 per issue (Media and Communication Center).

Fortune is a weekly business newspaper, established in May 2000 published and distributed by Independent News & Media Plc. The newspaper's circulation is around 8000 copies (Independent News & Media Plc).

Capital is a weekly business newspaper, established in December 1998, is published and distributed by Crown Publishing Plc, private limited company. Similarly, the paper's circulation is estimated to be around 8000 copies (Crown Publishing Plc).

Similarly, selection of informants for individual in-depth interview was based on purposive sampling. As Denscombe (2007:189) stated, keeping in mind the overall aim of the study, interview participants are more likely to be chosen purposely because they have some special contribution to make due to their distinctive insights or the position they hold.

Selection of focus group (FGD) discussion participants have to be based on primarily on availability but the people need to be whom the researcher knows something about .Because of the nature of focus groups, researchers commonly use purposive sampling as the basis for selecting. This means participants are selected on the basis of some personal quality that is relevant to the purpose of the research (ibid: 182).

In the case of *Fortune* and *Capital* the researcher decided to make former journalists informant because they are staffed with inexperienced and few journalists respectively. These journalists are still working for the print media.

3.1.4 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing data for analysis, a process whereby the data is going be reduced into themes through coding and categorizing the codes, and at the end, representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. This is the general data analysis procedure that researchers use with some variations depending on different approaches of inquiry (Creswell, 2007:148, Yin, 2011:177). As noted in (Madison, 2005; Huberman & Miles, 1994; Wolcott, 1994b cited in Creswell), researchers commonly focus on vital element of qualitative data analysis, i.e., data coding. It involves deconstructing the data into meaningful categories and naming these categories, arranging the codes into broader categories or themes, and putting the data in order to make comparisons. However, the authors

reflect different point of views in the data analysis process. For example, Wolcott (1994b) emphasizes on the importance of the need for description from the data and relating the description to the literature. Following the general data analysis procedure, the researcher is interested in relating the data with the literature.

The general five steps data analysis process used by most qualitative studies, regardless of their particular qualitative orientation, consists of, as Yin (2011) puts it,

Compiling: Sorting field notes amassed from fieldwork and other data collection methods. It is putting them in some order and the final compilation might be considered a database.

Disassembling: Breaking down the compiled data into smaller pieces. The procedure may (but does not necessarily have to) be accompanied by assigning new labels, or “codes,” to the fragments or pieces.

Reassembling: Rearrangement and recombination using substantive themes, codes or clusters of codes to reorganize the disassembled pieces into different groupings and sequences than might have been in the original notes.

Interpreting: involves using the reassembled material to create a new narrative, which will become the key analytic part.

Concluding: drawing conclusions from the entire study. Such conclusions should be related to the interpretation in the fourth phase and through it to all of the other phases of the cycle (pp.178-79).

This is a qualitative data analysis process Wimmer & Dominick (2011:120) call constant comparative technique, one of the two best known techniques of qualitative data analysis first articulated by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and further developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

3.1.5 Ethical Considerations

Due to different reasons, there is a need for ethical considerations throughout research process of data collection, analysis and dissemination. In Wimmer & Dominick's (2011:65) words "Most mass media research involves observations of human beings asking them questions or examining what they have done. However, in this probing process the researcher must ensure that the rights of the participants are not violated. This concern for rights requires a consideration of ethics."

Ethical issues can be grouped into informed consent procedures; deception or covert activities; confidentiality of participants, sponsors, and colleagues; benefits of research to participants over risks; and other participant requests as Lipson(1994 cited in Creswell,2007:141).

Unethical behavior may have a consequence for research participants (Wimmer & Dominick 2011:65). Hence the researcher has considered the above ethical issues; particularly keeping in mind sensitivity of the topic under investigation, the researcher has kept reporters and four editors' confidentiality. Because of the nature of focus groups (FGD), there is a need to keep confidentiality of information (Denscombe, 2007:183).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Data presentation and analysis

In this paper, the researcher is interested in investigating external influence on news reporting. In this chapter, the findings of the research are going to be presented, analyzed and discussed. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 12 individuals, four from each selected media houses and two focus group discussions (FGDs) in one of the media houses. Despite some differences, the questions presented for participants in both methods were basically similar. Among the informants, five have had experience of working for *Reporter* and *Fortune* Newspapers while three have worked for all the papers included in the study. One of the informants worked for *Fortune* and *Capital*. Though their account primarily refers to the media house they are currently working for, it can also resonate for the other papers.

The analysis that is going to be presented here is done based on the viewpoints in the theoretical framework and the model presented in the literature review parts of this paper. The findings of the study are presented as follows:

4.1.1 Sources and Source-Journalist Relationship

Regarding the first question, i.e., source selection in both focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews, the views of all (8) focus group discussion participants and all interviewees (12) from the newspapers were similar. They noted that they rely heavily on official sources for the sake of credibility and conveniences. For example, news reporter kaleb Alebachew (news reporter) focus group discussion 1 participant from *The Reporter*, Yonathan Melaku (former reporter & deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune* and Bisrat Gibru (former reporter) of *Capital* shared their views as follows:

Kalab: Our sources are those that hold official position in government structure, higher officials of companies and experts. Because of time, availability and news test, we might even have preferences from the official sources.

Yonathan: I prefer to use government officials, company owners, directors, business executives and department heads. They are the ones who are credible even though they can be cited as anonymous, especially when the news is sensitive. If these sources are not available, we go to PR directors/officers. We also use official documents like from court, city administration (July 22, 2010, for example).

Bisrat: Official sources are credible and most of the time, we quote those we believe their input is significant. They can be government officials, experts or heads of nongovernmental organizations and there are cases in which impacted people can be sources as well.

Similarly, most of the respondents have confirmed their high dependence on official sources not only in terms of credibility or convenience but also they believe the frequently quoted are news makers and pointed out that ordinary people can only be sources in the case of accidents or catastrophes. But *The Reporter's* managing editor, Melaku Demisse, and *Fortune's* deputy managing editor, Hailu Wondemu, tried to relate why their sources are skewed to officials with problem of access to information and issue of verification, respectively.

Melaku: Despite the fact that there is a law to guarantee access to information, it is very difficult to get information from most of the organizations because of their closed door policy. So we are forced to rely on some sources and they take advantage of this fact to manipulate content to favor their interest.

Hailu: Sources have to be in some sort of position and authorization. They have to be some people that I am able to say "it's him/her who said this and that" in the case of consequences. But we are trying to break this trend by working more on verification.

Based on the focus group discussion participants and the interviewees' account, it is safe to say that most journalists believe that relying on official sources is the right way of doing business in journalism. Thus, exclusion of ordinary people's accounts and unlimited access of those in position doesn't seem problematic. The Journalists stated that they not only rely on official sources but also only on those officials who are accessible. This trend can be associated with the development of the private press and the media landscape of the country as well as issues of professionalism. Furthermore, it can be linked to the question of which sources are more accessible and what makes them accessible and this in turn leads to journalist-source relationship.

On the other hand, responses of participants and interviewees had little difference across the papers, between editors and reporters when it comes to the questions of interest of sources though all the informants shared the idea that journalists become acquainted with sources through time. Aschenaki Wolde and Andenet Amare (both news reporters) from *The Reporter*, as well as Melaku Demisse (Managing editor of the same paper), Hailu Wondmu (deputy managing editor), Yonathan Melaku (former news reporter & deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune*, Fitsum Tamene (editor-in-chief & news reporter, *Capital*), Bisrat Gibru (former senior reporter) of *Capital* responded as follows:

Aschenaki: We can be friends with sources through time. There are sources that tip us news just because they like doing so and there are also sources who give us information with different intent like when there is some sort of friction in their offices and want to get the news in their favor. There are times I tone down news in order not to lose my sources as well as times that I decided to lose them over the news. Most of the time, it's the news and the type of sources (they might be those who give exclusive information) that affect my decision.

Andenet: There are times sources ask for favor and my response depends on what they ask and mostly they ask for little things that cannot affect the news as such. There are sources who always give news tips with no intent. They are just happy doing that. I believe my friendship with sources has never been a problem because my sources know how the media operates and do not ask something that is against journalistic practice or maybe they do not have interest related to the news they tip or to be quoted as source.

Melaku: There were times we faced problems because of journalists-source relationship. Some sources not only give information but also give direction and disappointed when the information they give got balanced by incorporating other voices. Sometimes they are manipulated and what they say is influenced by interests of others.

Hailu: There is no government official or business owner who doesn't want to be friends with journalists. We haven't had difficulties because of journalists' relation with sources, except very few times. This relationship needs to be handled carefully and it needs regulation since it affects credibility of any news.

Yonathan: There is high turnover and the office is always staffed with inexperienced journalists. Due to this reason, in our case, the relationship with sources usually couldn't reach at the stage where it can affect content.

Fitsum: Sources can have vested interest and want to get news in their favor and sometimes specific stories or information to be suppressed. There are times when they get what they wanted and we had experience of a serious consequence in one incident. But I believe it's us the journalists who benefit most from the relationship, by getting steady flow of information as well as credible (2008, for example).

Bisrat: There are sources we tone down because of their closeness and through time they develop a feeling that it's their right to demand what they want and pressurize the reporter. Especially sources who give important news tip come up with something that is not news worthy. This can put the reporter and the editor in

different positions when the editor wants the news to be published as it is or drop it while the reporter wants to tone it down.

As indicated above, all the informants from the newspapers shared the fact that journalists become friends with sources, though this is rare in the case of *Fortune*, staffed with few journalists (8 including both editors & reporters) and there is high turnover. Though they try to maintain the relationship while striving to keep it professional, all news reporters from *Reporter* and *Capital* admitted that there are times when they compromise for the interest of sources.

It is difficult to show the extent to which reporters at *Reporter & Capital* compromise for the sake of the interest of their sources since the decision depends on journalists' judgment and the value they give for particular news and sources. But it seems that the news reporters and editors' (editor-in-chief & deputy) view of the degree of the risk that can arise from the relationship is different across the papers. Top editors asserted that the relationship needs regulation while news reporters do not think the relationship needs careful consideration as such.

4.1.2 Routine News Gathering and Public Relations

Before going into discussing the findings regarding this topic, it is important to look at the routine of news gathering in the selected media houses. Attending press conferences, using press releases and beat reporting were accepted patterns in the three newspapers included in this study. Although informants view (to some extent within a media house) regarding how they try to get their own angle from these events varies, they all share the idea that events are covered as they are. Addis Feleke (news reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant from *Reporter*, Melaku Demessie (managing editor) of *Reporter*, Ayenew H/Selassie (coach editor), Yonathan Melaku

(former reporter & deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune*, Fasil Taye (assignment editor) & Bisrat Gibru (former reporter) of *Capital* expressed their views as follows:

Addis: we regularly attend events and try to get our own angles. But mostly, at the conclusion of an event, public relations (PRs) approach us individually and tell us what they want to be emphasized. Depending on the reaction of the journalist, they even call to the editors to get the coverage in their favor. And the editors also try to tell the journalist the same thing systematically.

Melaku: Most of the time, we try to get our own angle. But those who organize the event and invite us complain, citing we cover the unintended issue though it is a fact being reported. However, there are times when events are covered as they are because of journalists' lack of effort, deadline pressure and need to fill pages .

Aynew: It can be said that most of the pieces we do currently are PRs. But this is not a matter of choice rather a limitation.

Yonathan: Event based news were few. In addition, changing angle and making them in depth was our approach in covering events. But it can also be entertained as it is on 'Radar' page (designed to break news leads that couldn't be done according to the house style) as last resort though the page was not intended to entertain such kind of issue.

Fasil: Most of our news is event oriented though we try to select events and change angles. However, changing angle sometimes has consequences; so, sometimes we cover them as they are.

Bisrat: Often event news get published as they are because of reasons like institutional financial capacity, editors experience and initiative of the journalists (most of the time most journalists want to do simple stories).

The data indicated that though journalists try to get their own angle, media houses and journalists view these events as key ways to access information. Given the financial capacity and issues of

professionalism of the Ethiopian private media, securing access to information is crucial and there is a need to maintain this access. This can have influence on how events should be reported. On the other hand, since these events are arranged by organizations with interest and if they don't get the media coverage in their favor, at least to some extent, there might not be a point in inviting the media house next time. Moreover, the organizers of these events react if they find the coverage is not in their interest. If these organizations happen to be government offices, risking access to such events cannot be simple. Because the government is a major, often inaccessible, source of information for the media. If it happens to be private companies like MIDROC Ethiopia, it might be risking both access and potential advertiser. On the other hand, changing angles in covering events may not necessarily mean the coverage cannot be in the interest of the organizers in some way.

Beat reporting is one of the routine news gathering methods. Most informants from *Reporter* and *Capital* explained how beat reporting affects content while currently there is no beat reporting at *Fortune* because it is staffed with few reporters. Although few informants don't believe beat reporting can have disadvantages. Aschenaki Wolde & Kaleb Alebachew (news reporters) focus group discussion 1 participants from *Reporter*, Melaku Demisse (managing editor) of *Reporter*, Fitsum Tamene (editor-in-chief) of *Capital* and Taye Mezmur (former reporter) of *Capital* shared their views on beat reporting as follows:

Aschenaki: Beat reporters close relationship with the organization they beat on through time lead them to develop an attitude that holds them from doing adversarial news. In some areas, beat reporting poses a serious problem for us.

Kalab: when we decide not to do some news in our beat area, it's not because of pressure from officials of the organizations we beat but because they convince us by letting us consider different things and see the bigger picture.

Melaku: There is abuse of specialization both by the side of the journalist and organizations they beat on. Beat reporters don't want to do adversarial news on the organizations. Similarly, they are not willing to cooperate by giving contacts if other colleague wants to do such stories and the organizations also refuse to give information in such instances. Furthermore, they complain when the newspaper manages to publish such stories and they also say why? when we assign another reporter in some of their events.

Fitsum: Though we have small number of journalists, we still have beat reporters. It has an advantage though there is a tendency of becoming family with the organization and as a result we tone down and in some cases drop stories in the liking of the organizations. This is not unique for us and even beat reporters from other media houses request us to drop particular news in their beat area.

Taye: It is advantageous in terms of access and specialization and I don't think there is a way beat reporting can have disadvantage.

Beat reporters admitted that they tone down and at times drop stories in their beat areas accepting the justification of officials and experts from the organizations they beat on. This shows that they share the values of the organization they beat on by breaching journalistic principles. In addition editors' assertion that there is pressure from the organizations, reporters beat on reflects the degree of expectation of the organization not only from the journalist but also from the media. The fact that beat reporters not only try to hinder coverage of adversarial news in their beat area in their media house but also in others shows the possibility that contents in media houses where there is no beat reporting (e.g., *Fortune*) can be affected.

Public Relations professionals (PRs) are the key personnel in relation to event organization as well as beat reporting and they are the bridge between their organization and the media and/or journalists. The responses of all of the informants regarding influence of public relations were similar. Eskendir Zelalem (news reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant from *Reporter*,

Yonathan Melaku (former reporter& deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune* and Taye Mezmur (former reporter) of *Capital* shared their opinion as follows:

Eskendir: Most of the time, public relations professionals try to influence journalists through manipulation and denying access. Sometimes, they even resist giving information in the case of favorable coverage.

Yonathan: Just like other sources, public relations officers try to influence content by giving confusing information, deceiving and through denying access. They might also take inexperienced journalists for a ride. After adversarial news on their organizations, public relations professionals push for favorable coverage as damage control strategy. Most of the time, we are willing to entertain such kind of coverage but the coverage might not discredit our previous news.

Taye: Public relations officers in most government offices are not willing to give information for journalists of the private press. Even those that are willing, try to manipulate a journalist by releasing certain information and holding other pieces. When they want to punish a journalist, they give exclusive information for another journalist from a competing paper.

From the informants' response, it can be concluded that public relations officers (PRs) use both giving and denying information to influence media content. On the other hand, they try to manipulate particular situations of the private press; for example, the challenge they are facing in easily accessing information, the existence of inexperienced journalists in the sector and competition to get exclusive information among newspapers in their favor. Possibly, the manipulation cannot be limited only to these.

4.1.3 News coverage of the powerful and advertisers

While discussing influence on newspaper content, it is worth examining how the powerful (government, business companies, multinational corporations, advertisers and other powerful

sources) are being covered in the media. Although there were slight differences between reporters and editors on how the influence of the powerful work out to influence content at *Reporter* and *Capital*, responses of all the informants from both media houses was yes to the existence of the influence. While in *Fortune*, informants had different opinion regarding influence of the powerful. Some said that there were instances, though few, when the powerful would attempt to influence content. Others argued that despite their trial, there was no chance for the powerful to influence content. Addis Feleke (news reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant from *Reporter*, Zekarias Sintayehu (Editor-in-chief) of *Reporter*, Yonathan Melaku (former reporter& deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune* ,Hailu Wondemu (deputy managing editor) of *Fortune* Taye Mezmur (former reporter of *Capital*), Fasil Taye (assignment editor) of *Capital* explained as follows:

Addis: Those with political power and money can get favorable coverage, unfavorable ones to be dropped and factual news to be retracted. There are also times when stories are edited in accordance with the interest of these people. I saw such kind of things in relation to the news I wrote on some financial institutions and multinational corporation (In 2013, for example).

Zekarias: There are times we get phone calls from top government officials and private company heads to drop particular news but we don't agree with them unless the request is reasonable. On the other hand, we see some sort of influence on news that reporters write, especially in sectors where there are competing business companies. And there are times when such kind of news got published and we were forced to retract. On the contrary, some try to pressurize us to retract even if we have evidence of the facts in which case we tell them to go to court. Others come to complain and we give them the chance to publish their opinion. Currently, there are officials and private companies hindering our company's different projects in retaliation for the stories we have published and to stop us from doing adversarial news about them again.

Yonathan: Most of the time, business companies plead, send mediator for adversarial news not to be published or at least to be held for some days. They come to complain after we publish such kind of stories and they don't say our coverage is incorrect; rather they say that it's affecting their business. Finally, they express their desire in establishing close relationship with the company. There are few instances where the powerful managed to make news to be dropped. I believe not being a political paper has protected the paper (*Fortune*) from pressure of the political sphere.

Hailu: Because of the nature of the job, we deal with powerful people. There are things we are forced to compromise but not major ones. After the publication, they come and complain, they deny access and they try to pressurize us in different ways; but it doesn't help them get what they want.

Taye: There are threats from government officials; but mostly, tyranny of the business is higher, especially in affiliated companies. They complain, demand retraction of factual news at front page; they request favorable coverage. The approach of the paper with regards to such issues was appeasing, i.e., in one way or another, giving what they requested.

Fasil: Both the government and business organizations try to influence our content using their power. Instances where we retracted news inappropriately are not few, and recently, we were forced by the government to retract news that was on government media. Sometimes, their request is not limited to retraction; rather they will keep on pressurizing us. They even demand for a journalist to get fired. Recently, we were charged in court because of news we published while the same news was on the *Reporter* and nothing happened to them. As a media house, we protect ourselves from any confrontation both with the government or the business sector, and we prefer pacifying (Feb , 2015, for example).

As the data indicates, the powerful try to influence the content of all the newspapers under study, though extent to which the influence affects the content might be determined by each media's approach in dealing with the powerful and the power of the powerful. Similarly, the respondents

said that all the three newspapers give second chance of coverage for those who complain after adversarial news. However, the page on which they entertain such coverage differs. In this case, it is likely that the content is in the interest of the powerful and this can be considered as a means of making peace with the powerful.

But there is difference in relation to retraction within and across the media. For example, in the case of *Reporter*, the editors claimed that most of ‘inappropriate’ retractions were results of not having evidence at hand though the report was factual. On the contrary, reporters have noted instances where there were forced retractions while there was evidence. There was no forced retraction stated at *Fortune* while there were pressures to retract stories whether the news was factual or not in the case of *Capital*. Apart from the existence of pressure by external power, their difference with regards to retraction can be explained in terms of the media houses’ working culture and journalistic standard.

In general, in the case of the *Reporter*, the influence comes both through reporters and editors while in *Capital*, it can be said that not getting in trouble with the powerful is a strategy used at top editors’ level. In the case of *Fortune*, because of the houses strict working culture, there might be a little chance for reporters to influence content in accordance with the interest of the powerful. Rather, the influence of the powerful is more likely to come from above.

Looking at how the media deal with one of the powerful- advertisers- might demonstrate well how the powerful use their power to get what they want in the media. Advertisers often demanded positive coverage and tried to threaten all the three newspapers by pulling advertisements in the event of the newspaper’s coverage of adversarial news. Respondents from *Reporter* and *Fortune* stressed that they treat news, even the adversary one, about their

advertisers just like other news, while respondents at *Capital* explain that they have some sort of reservation with regards to adversarial news on their advertisers. Musba Husaine (news reporter) and focus group 2 participant from *Reporter*, Zekarias Sintayehu (Editor-in-chief) of *Reporter*, Hailu Wondemu (deputy managing editor) of *Fortune*, Fitsum Tamene (editor- in-chief) & Bisrat Gibru (former reporter) of *Capital* shared their view as follows:

Musba: Basically when we write news we are not even aware whether the involved parties are advertisers or not. For instance, one time, a company that gave a one-year advertisement contract has cancelled and pulled its Ad following adversarial news that the paper published. On the other hand, journalists are repeatedly requested by the marketing department/the owner to bring advertisement.

Zekarias: There are journalists who bring advertisement and write the news about the same organization. Since their salary is low, it is acceptable for them to bring advertisement and get commission. But they don't have to be the ones to cover the news that involves the advertiser that gave them the advertisement. It is clearly stated in our code of conduct as well. Because of our coverage there are advertisers that pulled their Ad but came back later. However, Ad is crucial for us; we see advertising in our paper as a privilege.

Hailu: Advertisers believe it's their right to demand positive coverage and they don't expect to see adversarial news on our paper. There are advertisers which pulled their Ad following such events. Our office was on a certain building. It was rent and based on our deal, we used to pay in cash and advertisement. Following the publication of news about the owners' involvement in corruption, our deal was nullified and they increased the rent (2010, for example).

Fitsum: There are times when we let advertisers know there is news that could be against their interest and know their reaction. There are also times that we did adversarial news on advertisers and they pulled back their advertisement while others decide to remain after positive coverage. On the other hand, reporters come

with news and advertisement and this keeps them look after the interest of the advertiser. Marketing department also tries to influence the news desk with regards to the coverage of advertisers but we prefer to work in collaboratio.

Bisrat: There is a tendency of toning down for advertisers and this is not for the sake of personal gain but the survival of the paper. We can do adversarial news on advertisers but it will be heavily edited to the extent that the journalist prefers the news not to be published and this could be a lesson for journalists on how to cover issues related to advertisers. It is also common for people from marketing to request the news desk positive coverage for advertisers.

As the data indicates, advertisers can get news in their favor through journalists in the newspapers except *Fortune*, where journalists are not allowed to bring advertisement. The fact that journalists bring advertisement can have ethical consequences. Similarly, the push from marketing in the case of *Reporter* and the editorial team's collaboration with marketing regarding advertisement in the case of *Capital* has serious implications on content. On the other hand, if we look at *Fortune*'s particular instance, the newspaper's decision to publish adversarial news on its major advertiser and land owner of the rental office can be seen as its commitment to journalistic principles. The reaction of the advertiser can also show the extent to which the powerful can exert their power. But primarily the newspaper's special rent arrangement can be seen as a reflection of mutual relationship of the media with the powerful.

4.1.4 Editors' decision and owners' interference

Ownership interference here viewed as organizational factor that also serves as a channel for external influence. All the editors in the three media houses drop news stories when the influence is apparent for them and demand news to be done again. But all the informants except the managing editor and the editor in- chief at *Reporter* asserted that in most of such cases, editors'

decision is not based on journalistic standards; rather on their personal and ownership interest. While in the case of *Capital*, all respondents confirmed that there is prevailing ownership interference. In *Fortune*, all the respondents shared the view that there is no loophole in the working culture of the house that lets the editors influence content in their favor. However, two of the respondents asserted that there is subliminal ownership influence while the other two didn't agree with this idea. Addis Feleke (news reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant, Zekarias Sintayehu(editor-in chief) of *Reporter*, Hailu Wondemu (deputy managing editor),Yonathan Melaku (former reporter & deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune*, Bisrat Gibru (former reporter), Fitsum Tamene(editor-in-chief) of *Capital* expressed their opinions as follows:

Addis: I could say it is common for the publisher to tell us particular stories to be covered or dropped. Editors do the same thing, giving explanations that don't convince. There are times editors or owner's decision result in a publication of stories that completely contradict our previous account (In 2015, for example).

Zekarias: Journalists have perception that there are stories the publisher doesn't want and even when I encourage them to do such stories they refuse. On the other hand, the publisher prefers to communicate with the reporters than us when he wants some issues to be covered.

Hailu: I could say there is no ownership interference. There are times I was told by the owner to drop stories but the publisher's explanation was convincing.

Yonathan: The owner is much more involved in news tipping. The absence of direct interference doesn't mean there is no ownership interference. I rather believe the interference is systematic and intricate. He demands some stories to be done differently. For example we have a style of court news reporting but there are court cases we have covered against our own principle (Aug 02,2010, for example).

Bisrat: There are embassies, international organizations and private companies that get positive coverage regularly because of the owner and editor's personal relations with them.

Fitsum: ownership interference not only resulted in positive coverage for some organizations but also the owner often demands to check the news and refuses to publish particular stories. From such kind of instances, I came to realize the unwritten rule and act accordingly in dealing with stories (2013, for example).

Almost all the informants confirmed that there is ownership interference across the papers. However, there is a difference in form (whether the interference is direct or not) and how much owners are involved in the editorial business. The form of the interference and the degree of publishers' involvement in the editorial business can determine the extent to which ownership is being used as a filter to influence the newspapers' content and also the media's working culture and journalistic standard.

On the other hand, owners' interference to give favorable coverage for particular organizations and editors decision that is based on personal relationship can be seen as a reflection of the medias' mutual relationship with external groups. Reporters' decision (based on the perception that there are some issues the owner do not want to be covered) to leave some issues and editors decision that is based on ownership interest can show the extent of ownership interference in *Reporter and Capital*.

4.1.5 Pressure for self-censorship

Regarding the existence of self-censorship, informants' response within and across the media was different. Focus group discussion 1 participants said there is pressure for self-censorship both on the side of the reporters and editors while participants from focus group discussion 2 explained that unlike the editors, they (reporters) don't self-censor. But all the informants from

Capital confirmed there is self-censorship. Some respondents from *Fortune* said there is self-censorship to a limited extent while others say there is no self-censorship at all. Musba Husaine (reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant, Kaleb Alebachew (reporter) focus group discussion 2 participant, Melaku Demisse (managing editor) of *Reporter*, Hailu Wondemu (deputy managing editor), Feker Belay(former deputy editor-in-chief) of *Fortune*, Bisrat Gibru (former reporter) of *Capital* shared their views as follows:

Musba: I don't censor myself but I think the editors do. It can be both with the intention of protecting the journalists and because of any other consequence such as being summoned and charged (2014, for example).

Kaleb: We drop and tone down stories considering possible risks and editors do the same in fear of charges. At times, they tell us to drop stories diplomatically and some other times, they try to give explanations though they are not convincing (2015, for example).

Melaku: There is the anti-terrorism law that forces us to always think twice. We won charges filed against us but it was tiresome. So, we prefer to be very careful and we demand the evidences at hand when we do stories more than ever before (2015, for example).

Feker: With regards to news, I believe there wasn't self-censorship. There might have been some self-censorship in relation to editorial.

Hailu: There is but the degree is insignificant. We were doing stories that involve a company that already filed 20 million birr charge against us while the case was pending (2009, for example).

Bisrat: There is self-censorship, especially on sensitive issues. There is fear of repercussion and the newspaper follows a policy of no clash with the government or other entities. We prefer the safest way but still there were charges against us.

The data indicates respondents' beliefs in the existence of self-censorship although it varies in its degree and extent. There are also variations as to whether the editors or both the editor and the reporter do the self-censorship. This is because of fear of repercussion. There are charges filed by the government and big businesses against the private press and these charges can threaten the papers.

The civil law suit that Ayat, a private real estate Share Company, filed in 2007 against *Fortune*, claiming compensation for damages worth a little over 20.4 million Birr and the criminal lawsuit filed in 2009 by athlete Kenenisa against *Reporter*, alleging that the newspaper had defamed his reputation by publishing false information, can be good examples in this regard.

In both cases, the court dismissed all of the claims made by the plaintiffs and set all the defendants free. Given the financial capacity of the Ethiopian private press, the compensation claimed by Ayat would have forced the paper to shut down if the verdict was otherwise. Similarly, if Kenenisa won, it would have damaged the reputation of *Reporter* and it would have been a lesson for the powerful as to how to silence the media. This, in turn, would have sent a chilling effect on other media houses causing them to refrain from writing stories, especially stories that are against the interest of the powerful in order to avoid risks that may go as far as the closure of the a media house.

On the other hand, variations of the degree of self-censorship can be explained in terms of the newspaper's orientation, their journalistic standard and their financial capacity. For example, because of the newspapers' political orientation, the pressure for self-censorship might be higher at *Reporter*. While *Fortune*, relatively in a better financial status and journalistic standard, might be able to resist the pressure for self-censorship.

4.2 Discussion of the findings

As an ongoing global trend, there is heavy reliance on official sources by the newspapers the study considered. But particular characteristics of the country's private press, which include problems of access to information, weak financial status and professional issues, have further pushed the papers to rely on limited sources from the official sources. This has put the media in a situation that makes it vulnerable for manipulation and pressure of sources.

Sources that make themselves available for the media are mostly accessible and the most frequently quoted ones. The question that what makes them accessible leads to another question of what is in the media coverage for them. It could be inferred from the data that it is their interest that makes them accessible and it is them that managed to establish close relationship with the journalists and/or the newspapers.

Journalists from the papers confirmed that they concede to the interest of sources weighing the actual request (interest) of the sources and how worthy the sources are. However, it is not only information that is the power of sources but sources can have money and official position that can get them what they want. And these are also factors that affect journalists' judgment about whether to give into the interest of the sources.

Significant number of journalists asserts that there are sources that don't have any interest but give information on regular basis. But this is questionable because these sources cannot keep on subsidizing the media with information for nothing. Maybe these sources don't have any interest for the time being but they want to be close to the media and remain sources for the journalists knowing that they can benefit from the relation when they want. Another possible explanation might be these sources are already getting what they want through subliminal ways even

journalists are not aware of. This could be why there is a difference between reporters and editors regarding their view of the degree of possible risks in journalists' close relationship with sources. However, it's the reporters that come in contact with sources most and likely to be friends with sources; editors are also engaged in similar relationships that have implications for news.

Generally as Gans (2004, pp. 81&166) argued, the relationship of journalists and/or the newspapers with their sources is characterized by cooperation and manipulation where it's the sources who has the upper hand in the relationship. This also refers to 'Sourcing mass media news filter' of Herman & Chomesky's propaganda model. According to the model, mass media have symbiotic relationship with powerful information sources which is based on interdependency and reciprocity.

Routine news gatherings practices like covering press conferences, press releases, other events and beat reporting in the media houses can be seen as sources' institutionalized mechanisms of subsidizing the media with information .However, there is a slight difference in the media houses studies on how they cover or how events get covered by the newspapers. On top of this, almost all informants from the newspapers confirmed that events are most important means to access information; but they asserted that they don't report events as they are but with different angles.

But changing angles also depends on who is the organizer of the event (since because of the organizer's position, sometimes changing angles can have consequence), how experienced the journalists are, deadline pressure, pages to be filled and whether the media is capable of

investigating further the tips from events. Both editors and reporters confirmed that events get covered as they are because of the above stated reasons.

Events are like investments and it's those who have the means and power that can manage to organize them. So, they are not intended to support the private press; rather, they are a means of getting favorable coverage in the media. This is how powerful organizations subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news according to Herman & Chomsky's (2002:19) propaganda model.

Taking beat reporting as an instance from routine news gatherings, the practice of journalists of the newspapers demonstrate the concept of "going native," which refers to a process by which journalists become allies of sources. They are not only physically close to the organizations but they become part of it socially and culturally while leaving the principle of journalistic independence behind. But the question is not only an issue of professional standard but also there are ethical issues with regards to beat reporting as well as events. As Schudson (2003:144) points out, organizations pay journalists' media travel, hotel and meals when the reporting is out of town.

In addition, the close relationship that results from beat reporting possibly leads to symbiotic relationship between the media houses and those organizations journalists beat on. The fact that beat reporters from one media house ask reporters, even editors, in another media house to get some stories in the interest of the organizations they beat on, show the sphere of influence that result from beat reporting; that possibly includes not only the newspapers that this study examined but also others as well. In the end, because they shared the view points of the

organization they beat on and established symbiotic relationship with them, the practice would often lead reporters to self-censorship.

The architects of events- PRs- use every possible means, including befriending journalists and sheer deception. They have the clout for getting what they want in media coverage: rewarding and punishing journalists/media based on their organizations' interest and fixing damage of unfavorable coverage. However, it is information that is their power, and particular characteristics of their organization can also increase PRs power. As Gans (2004:117) argued, power of one kind or another can be a means to gain access for sources. For example, PRs that work for powerful government organizations, multinational corporations or big business companies can strengthen their influence using their political power, international experience plus finance and financial capacity, respectively. The fact that most PRs are former journalists themselves is another factor that strengthens the PRs influence on the newspapers.

Whom the media talked about the most and frequently quoted are the powerful ones. Ordinary people can only be newsworthy in times of accidents or when they get in trouble with the law or political system, as Gans (2004, pp. 9-13) described it. The powerful influence contents of the newspapers through reporters, editors, owners depending on various factors. For example, those that have close relationship with the owner or may be in the same circle, prefer to come through the owner. But in some cases, the influence is hidden and plays out in a subtle way.

The means the powerful groups use ranges from mutual benefit relationship with journalists and or/media to pressurizing. The newspapers owners' involvement in relation to the coverage of the powerful and some media's implicit policy of not getting in trouble with the powerful can be explained in terms of the media's structural position in the wider political economy of the

society. Herman & Chomsky (2002: xi) argued that media serve and propagandize on behalf of powerful groups that control and finance it and representatives of these powerful, who have special interest to advance, are well positioned to influence media content in different ways.

On the other hand, the powerful exert their power when the media deviate from serving their interests. It includes complaining (get retraction and another favorable coverage to fix the damage caused by the previous news), access denying, pulling Ads and filing charges. As it is shown in the data, powerful groups get a second chance for favorable coverage and they enforce retraction. Although providing a second chance for the powerful for a favorable coverage as a pacifying means was the explicit strategy of *Capital*, both *Reporter* and *Fortune* follow the same principle.

However, it is the sources that are powerful most of the time, although under some conditions, media exerts its power (Reese, 2014:309-311). Accordingly, it seems that the more the newspapers are in a better position, in terms of journalistic standard and finance, the lesser the degree of their vulnerability for external influence. As indicated in the data, there was an incident recently where news resulted in state charge against *Capital*, whereas it did not have any consequence for the *Reporter* which covered the issue with the same angle and emphasis as *Capital*.

Advertisers are among the powerful entities that use financing of the media as a leverage to influence news in their favor. As it is a common feature of the newspaper business worldwide, the lion's share of these newspapers' income comes from advertising, not from subscription. According to the data, advertisers influence the newspapers' content in one way or another. In addition, the blurry line between marketing and editorial and ownership and editorial is affecting

news content. As the data indicated, sales representatives and owners often request journalists to bring advertisements. When that happens, they are also the ones that cover news that involves the same advertisers. People from marketing departments approach the editorial desk to protect the interest of the advertisers.

Whether the response is positive or not, the possibility that marketing can request the editorial team such kind of question in itself signifies the existence of some sort of collaboration. This is particularly true for *Reporter* and *Capital*. While *Fortune*'s house rent deal with an advertiser can be a good example of how a media can establish mutual relationship with one of the powerful group, i.e., advertisers, although the fallout later came when the paper dared to publish critical news about the owner of the building.

There is ownership interference that influences the papers' news content. This is in line with Herman & Chomsky's argument that in relation to how media control by few large business firms, ownership pattern, profit orientation and their overall integration with wider political and economic system affect media content and news selection using their propaganda model.

Similarly, editors as well as reporters influence news because of their external tie, although this doesn't seem to be the case with *Fortune*, which managed to set a relatively better journalistic standard. The chance to influence news for reporters and editors seems minimal; but this journalistic standard cannot protect news from being influenced through ownership.

There is pressure for self-censorship across the papers studied although the degree of such pressure varies. In comparison, self-censorship was relatively low in *Fortune*, whereas editors self-censor was more than reporters' at *Reporter*. In *Capital* the pressure for self-censorship was equally higher both on reporters and editors. It could be said that the practice of self-censorship

was both market and state driven. But market driven self-censorship was more in the case of *Capital* and *Fortune*, whereas both market and state driven self-censorship was higher in *Reporter* (its political orientation might have contributed to this).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study followed by some possible recommendations.

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate external influence on news reporting. To this end, *Reporter* (Amharic), *Fortune* and *Capital* newspapers were selected from the Ethiopian print media.

Qualitative data gathering techniques of focused group discussion (FDG) and in-depth interview were employed to undertake the study. Using purposive and convenience sampling techniques, 18 journalists were selected for focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. In-depth interview was employed mainly to get rich data that would enable the researcher to examine meticulously the nature of external influences on news reporting while focus group discussions helped to get preliminary information and diverse views regarding the issue.

As a result, the data from both the Focus Group Discussants and the in-depth interviewees overwhelmingly revealed that there was external influence on news reporting of *Reporter* (Amharic), *Fortune* and *Capital* newspapers. Heavy reliance on official sources, journalist-source friendship, news gathering systems (routine) and news management of PR officers, advertisers' interest and self-censorship have contributed to such an influence.

Heavy reliance on official sources for credibility and convenience coupled with the problem of access to information gave the powerful immense leverage to influence news reporting in their favor. Journalists' friendship with sources has contributed to the toning down, the dropping and pressing of some stories although this was not a major factor in the case of *Fortune*. PRs orchestrated events to ensure that external forces get covered by the newspapers. However, there

were efforts by the papers to at least change the angles. PRs influence news reporting of the three newspapers through releasing information, denying access, deception and manipulation.

But such an influence seems minimal at *Fortune* because there is no loophole in the working culture of the house that easily lets the editors and reporters to influence content in favor of external forces. But there is hidden ownership influence and high degree of symbiosis with powerful business actors at *Fortune*.

Journalists at *Reporter* and *Capital* practiced self-censorship motivated by source and ownership interest as well as fear of repercussion from the government. Editors self-censored more than reporters at *Reporter*. On the other hand, there was little self-censorship at *Fortune*.

The study has revealed that the government, private business companies, multinational corporations, international organizations and prominent figures that managed to establish symbiotic relationship with the media wielded strong influence over the reporting of news at the papers examined. The means used by these groups to influence news ranges from manipulation to pressure.

As the findings indicates, the news of the business newspapers- *Fortune* and *Capital*- were affected more from the influence that came from the business community compared to *Reporter* (with political orientation) where state influence was much higher. But the findings also indicate that affiliated private companies were creating both kind of pressures for self-censorship at the newspapers.

Based on the data, it could, thus, be concluded that news reporting of the newspapers investigated was influenced by external political and economic actors' interests. A relatively better professional standard enabled *Fortune* to minimize the influence, and, hence, the degree of

variations of the influences was due to the newspapers' professional standard, financial status and the media landscape of the country.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of the study clearly show that there was external influence on the news reporting of the three newspapers, with the exception of *Fortune* where the influence was minimal. Journalist-source friendship and beat reporting, absence of clear line between editorial and marketing exposed *Reporter* and *Capital* for external influences. While heavy reliance on official sources and ownership interference is affecting news reporting of all the three newspapers. Thus, the study recommends that editorial team of the newspapers to be independent from ownership interference and journalists stick to the principle of journalistic independence in order to be free of any organizational and external groups influence. This is possible when the media houses achieve financial (not only political) independence and when the owners stay away from the editorial business. Thus for the realization of this, initiative of owners is important.

The study also recommends future research on the ramifications of such news content influence from external forces for the consumers of the news products.

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Appendices

Interview Guide Questions

Discussion Guide Questions for Focus Group Participants and In Depth Interview with News Reporters

1. Who are your sources? What makes them considered as sources?
2. Who (what issues) are frequently quoted (covered) by your newspaper?
3. To what extent you incline to certain information sources for the sake of efficiency in terms of time and other organizational costs?
4. How do you evaluate your news source selection? How do you rate your reliance on official sources and routine news formats or any other selection practice?
5. Describe your relationship with sources?
6. Have you or colleagues ever been told by government officials or other elite to frame or write a news story in a particular way or to drop it altogether? What were the reasons?
7. Do you think PRs and other officials try to manipulate journalists, pressure your media organization and/or journalists to get favorable coverage while suppressing adversarial news?
8. How do you evaluate your access to news sources and government held information?
9. How do you cover adversarial news on your sources or advertisers? Have you ever threatened by advertisers?

10. Is there instances where media laws have been misused by politicians to restrict the flow of information unfavorable to them?

11. To what extent there is self censorship of journalists as well as editors in your news organization?

12. How frequent you or your colleagues ever been requested by your editors to drop a particular news story? why?

13. How do you think of beat reporting?

14. To what extent economic factors can influence news reporting?

15. How do you think news content can be influenced internally and/or externally?

Interview Guide Questions for Editor in Chiefs and Deputy Editor in Chiefs

1. Do you believe sources can influence journalists (sources take journalists for ride)? If yes, to what extent?
2. How do your organization view media events? And how do you cover media events?
3. How do you think of beat reporting?
4. Who decides (and how is it decided) the news content in particular reference to news sources to be quoted?
5. Who (what issues) are frequently quoted (covered) by your newspaper?
6. Is an incline to certain information sources for the sake of efficiency in terms of time and other organizational costs? If yes, to what extent?
7. How do you evaluate your news source selection? How do you rate your reliance on official sources and routine news formats or any other selection practice?
8. Would you (or the responsible party for news production) refuse to print stories if you believe the interest of the source prevails?
9. Are there instances where sources demand censorship (inclusion / exclusion of specific information or particular news to be dropped)?
10. How do you deal with complaint from sources when they demand correction?
11. Do you think PRs and other officials try to manipulate journalists, pressure your media organization and/or journalists to get favorable coverage while suppressing adversarial news?

12. How do you evaluate reporters' access to information held by news sources and government?

13. Are there instances where media laws have been abused by politicians to restrict the flow of information unfavorable to them?

14. Is there practice of self-censorship undertaken by your reporters in covering news that are adversarial of political and economic elites? How do you think about its effect on news content?

15. How involved are publishers/owners in the functioning of the newspaper?

16. To what extent could economic factors influence news reporting?

17. Do you think news content can be influenced internally and/or externally? If yes, How?

18. Do you think your media organization is serving the interest of political officials or economic elites in some way?

19. Are there any cases of arbitrary harassment, arrest and intimidation you or your colleagues faced as a result of politicians' attempt to hinder the independence of your media?

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List of Informants

No	Name of informants	Position	Nationality
Informant 1	Melaku Demisse	Managing Editor of Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 2	Zekarias Sentayehu	Editor in chief of Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 3	Aschenaki Wolde	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 4	Andenet Amare	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 5	Addis Feleke	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 6	Kalab Alebachew	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 7	Musba Husaine	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 8	Eskinder Zelalem	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 9	Henok Abiye	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant10	Ashenafi Tesfaye	News reporter-Reporter Amharic	Ethiopian
Informant 11	Hailu Wondemu	Deputy managing editor of Fortune	Ethiopian
Informant 12	Ayenew H/Selassie	Coach editor -Fortune	Ethiopian
Informant 13	Yonathan Melaku	Former deputy editor in chief of Fortune	Ethiopian
Informant 14	Fiker Belay	Former editor in chief of Fortune	Ethiopian
Informant 15	Fitsum Belay	Editor in chief of Capital	Ethiopian
Informant 16	Fasil Taye	Assignment Editor of Capital	Ethiopian
Informant 17	Bisrat Gibru	Former reporter of Capital	Ethiopian
Informant 18	Taye Mezmur	Former reporter of Capital	Ethiopian